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Edited by

DAVID MARCUS

and

TERENCE SMITH

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DAVID MARCUS and TERENCE SMITH

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O'CASEY'S COURT

In this issue, by a stroke of singular good fortune, we are able to present a portion, hitherto unpublished, of Sean O'Casey's Autobiography, as well as a brilliantly informal article on O'Casey by Denis Johnston, whose plays are considered by many critics both here and abroad to be second in importance only to the elder dramatist.

Of the four volumes of Sean O'Casey's Autobiography already published, it is not too much to say that they contain some of his most memorable writing. An extraordinary book in its "pard-like spirit", it makes most other contemporary autobiographies seem dingy in comparison. And like the "Confessions" of Strindberg (a dramatist for whom O'Casey has a marked respect) its interest is greatly intensified in relation to the writer's main body of work; though it seems unlikely, to say the least, that O'Casey will ever share the sympathy that Strindberg came to feel towards the Catholic Church. For that institution he has nothing but contumely, and his attitude here is noticeably less Red than Black: that is to say, his vituperation of Catholicism, as well as his leaning towards other sects, resembles nothing so much as the "Black Protestant" pamphlet. What is one to make of his statement: "The Catholic way? Is there a widening way to wider thought there; is there the loving, immeasurable sweep of the imagination in art, science and literature in the Catholic way? Even in their own particular scheming truth? No, there isn't; not according to Newman, Acton, Duchesne, Dr. McDonald of Maynooth and many more eminent men who suffered and were abused for standing up to truth, giving her honour, and making this daughter of Time their dear sister"? And how do Cardinal Newman and Dr. McDonald come to find themselves in the company of Duchesne, who, we are told, is chiefly remembered for bringing a foul and baseless charge against Marie Antoinette? In referring to Lord Acton, born in Naples, Mr. O'Casey turns our thoughts—so peculiar are instances—to a channel equally out of the way. We are forced to remember that Viceroy of Naples who in a play by Paul Claudel, perhaps (and only perhaps) as great a dramatist as O'Casey, says

"And who then better than Rubens has glorified Flesh and Blood, the very flesh and blood in which it was God's will to clothe Himself, the instrument of our redemption? . . .

"Shall all this beauty be in vain? come of God, is it not meant to return to Him? The poet and the painter must be at hand to offer it to God, to join word to word and from all together to give thanksgiving and acknowledgement and prayer outside of time . . .

"It is with His work in all its fulness that we shall pray to God".

There, yes, Sean O'Casey, there is the expression of what is *best* in the Catholic Church: the informing spirit of her art, her architecture, her contemplative life, her thought, her poetry, her ceremonial splendour. And Protestantism? It is no disparagement to the rectitude of that creed to suggest that André Gide, immersed in it from early childhood, has sufficiently well described its essential tendency in the very title of his well-known study of Protestant quietism, "Strait is the Gate".

The extract here presented from O'Casey's Autobiography takes up the narrative where it broke off with his departure for England in "Inishfallen Fare Thee Well". As many look on this as a turning point in the writing career of Sean O'Casey, it is therefore of particular interest. Cheering as well as novel is Denis Johnston's view that Sean O'Casey's self-imposed exile is not, as far as his development is concerned, a change for the worse. Mr. Johnston raises our hopes afresh in Ireland's greatest living dramatist.

THE EDITORS.

SEAN O'CASEY

A GATE CLANGS SHUT

RUNNING from London, fleeing from poverty as aforetime Milton fled from the plague. A man can flee from a plague, but never from poverty. It kisses him sourly when he wakes in the morning, and goes to bed with him at night; lies between him and his wife if he happens to be married. Sean was in a bad way, for little had come in since his battle with Yeats over the play, *The Silver Tassie*, which had been rudely placed under anathema by the poet. His work, accepted before, had now to force another way forward. Sean had to start all over again, separated from the passive approval of Yeats and his admirers. Reviewers who hadn't even yet found a way of their own, copied the condescending criticism of Yeats. Even Dr. Starkie, one of the Abbey Directors, putting a hand to his better ear, caught the Yeatsian echo of "O'Casey is losing his dramatic fire by remaining in England; he is separating himself from his roots, and is beginning to write of things in which he has no interest." So Dr. Starkie answered the echo by sending one of his own into the attentive air, saying, "O'Casey has left the scenes of his impressionable years, and has ceased to see intensely."

A most unfair and cleverly-stupid statement to make. Sean had begun to write the play before he had been a year in England, and it couldn't have been possible to lose in less than a year the impressions of forty. Again, a good deal of this time had been infused into the London production of his older plays, so that maybe a lunar month remained for him to lose his "power to see intensely". Again, again, both Yeats and Starkie had spent far more than a year away from Ireland themselves, yet no one accused them of having lost the "power to see intensely"; indeed, Yeats had gone to school in England for quite a time, had lived in London as a young man, had; afterwards paid many visits there; yet no one had so far accused him that because of this he had "lost the power to see intensely". Again, again, Yeats himself was inspired to write the lovely lyric, *Innisfree*, by the sight of tinkling water running down a window to keep things cool in a shop on the Strand of hot and dusty London.

So Sean and Eileen and their boy fled from London, after selling what remained of the lease of their London house; fled from the frying-pan of city poverty to the furnace of poverty in the glad, green country. A friend of Sean's said he'd a cottage in Chalfont St. Giles, he didn't want it, and Sean could live in it as long as he liked. Live in my heart and pay no rent. So off they hurried; Eileen first, and Sean to follow as soon as the furniture was stored. Then a message came from Eileen for a quick despatch of seven

pounds; the last tenant hadn't paid his telephone bill, so the Postal Authorities wouldn't allow its use till the bill had been paid. Poor Eileen in a hurry and anxious to have a talk with Sean, signed a form acknowledging responsibility, and, though Sean wrote to, and argued with, the district manager, he couldn't get a refund of the money. A bad start.

How charming the cottage looked from the road, the road that came from Amersham and went to London, with the Chiltern Hills encasing the country round, and tucking everything in nicely. Near London, too, for the great city was only nineteen miles away. So near and yet so far: the last bus from Amersham left early for London and London's last bus left early for Amersham, so one couldn't let a friend spend an evening with one, unless he was put up for the night, and a London friend had to say goodbye at seven, if he couldn't put you up, and you didn't wish to walk the nineteen miles back to the Chalfont home. Lively chat had to cease, good company break up at seven, if the one wanted to be carried back to London or the other wanted to be carried back to Chalfont.

It was an attractive road, hedged in with hazel, hawthorn, and bramble, which, in summer, held up vast bundles of wild bryony and wild clematis, giving place in autumn, to masses of old man's silvery beard and myriads of beady berries, green, yellow, orange, and crimson, of the woody nightshade. And on this road stood the Misbourne Cottages, two of them; looking like dolls' houses that the manor, Misbourne House, had originally built for the amusement of the children and the use of their workmen. Misbourne House, now filled with a rich, retired business-man and his family, stood, important and aloof, safe from foul contact, among its gardens, lawns, and its tennis-courts.

The cottages were surrounded by a trim privet hedge, and, at the gate of the one Sean and his family were to live in, was a lovely white lilac tree. Surely, the lilac is a rich feather in the cap of God's creation. A tiny garden of grass formed a mat in front of each cottage, ornamented with a round bed in the centre holding a red geranium within a circle of dreamy petunias. To the side, separating the cottage garden from the tradesmen's and workmen's entrance to the Big House, was a brick wall, sprinkled lavishly with slimy moss, with many ferny plants jutting from the crevices. Supporting this was a grassy slope which bordered a narrow path leading to the dry closet jutting out by itself from a side gable of the cottage. A towering, gaunt pine-tree stood uneasy in a corner of the little garden, looking as if it had been kidnapped when young, and was now trying to break through the hedge and join its companions in a wood. The front door opened into a space, half hall, half room, forming a dining-room, and from this room all the other places sprang. On the right was a small room, evidently meant to be a parlour, just big enough to hold a few chairs, a small table, and a stand by the window on which to place a flower-pot, or rest a book. Here, at night, Sean read and worked, stretched out flat on

his belly, with an oil-lamp beside his head, a practice that gave him a bad lump on his elbow, caused by the hard floor's friction, which gave a lot of trouble before it disappeared. At the back of the half-hall was the tiny kitchen where all cooking was done on an oil-stove, for the cottage had neither gas nor electricity; to the right of the kitchen, stairs, as steep as a ladder, led to a loft which took the place of a bedroom where the boy, his mother and nannie slept; outside of this room, along a narrow passage, was a cubby-hole big enough for a stretcher-bed, and here Sean slept stuffily, for there was no window in it; opposite was another cubby-hole in which the bath was so big that one wondered how it got in. Oil-lamp and candle had to say let there be light when the sun went down, though gas and electricity mains ran along the road but a few feet away from the garden. Chesterton would have enjoyed it a lot, and much more, if candlelight and lamp glow had been but the glimmer of a rushlight.

After some months of a bruised life, the landlord put in enough electricity for a few lights, Sean paying half the cost of installation. The rent was a pound a week, and when they were there for a time. Sean was presented with a bill for twenty pounds, four for his own tenancy and the rest for the tenancy of the last tenant who had gone suddenly to God knows where. The landlord expected that Sean, out of kindness to landlords, would pay the amount owing cheerily O; but Sean, in the hardness of his heart, refused. Eileen who had a passion for cleanliness, used the bath daily for herself and night and morning for the boy, till after the fourth day's use, the bath remained full and wouldn't empty itself for anyone. It was soon shown that this would never do, for the waste water, when released, poured down into a sump-hole, and when the sub-soil became soaked, the bath stayed full, and one had to wait till the waters subsided, which might take a week or ten days. Consummate cleanliness had to stop, and a bath brightened from a monotonous certainty into an exciting hope. The entire back of the house had no window, for it formed the gable-end of the big hot-house of the manor, making the whole house hot and stuffy on a fine day; and so a previous tenant had planted a meat-safe in the alley to the side of the house, providing a cooler place, a step away from the closet. The closet itself was a simple affair, consisting of a rough seat from wall to wall, with an exposed bucket beneath the hole, and a box of sand, with a shovel handy, to be used indiscriminately after a visit had been paid to it. In the winter, a visit at night was an adventure, carrying a candle which couldn't be lighted, if a breeze blew, till the closet had been entered and the door shut. How many miles to Babylon? Three score and ten. Can I get there by candlelight? Yes, and back again.

One night, groping his way along the alley, Sean slipped, and shot out a hand to the wall to save himself, immediately becoming conscious of slimy, wriggling things soiling the flesh of his hand. Lighting the candle, and shielding the light with his coat, he saw the

wall to be a mass of wriggling, twisting slime. Hundreds of thick-bodied snails, oozing their phosphorescent sweat out of them; and as many more corpulent slugs, were sliding damply up and down the wall; crowds of white, yellow, and pinkish worms crawled about between them; and myriads of fat woodlice and other vermin darted hither and thither when the light of the candle flame fell upon them. A walpurgis night of vermin. A hideous, crawling, wriggling world, active in the silence and the dark. Sean turned the candle-light on to the meat-safe, and there, too, on its legs, on its sides, and probing at the perforated panels, were the snails, the slugs, and the woodlice. Sean took the light away from the animated ooze and ugliness, and stood in the darkness, shuddering, for darkness could not now hide from his eyes the sight of the mean, unwholesome medley of squirming, slimy life. Eileen and he poured pounds of chloride of lime over the detestable wall, to purify the place, but, in spite of their efforts, night after night the wall was curtained with this noiseless medley of moist rottenness, crawling and twisting about in its own unhealthy and unholy slime. He felt sick. Today, when it crosses his mind, the wriggling facade appears again, and Sean shudders.

And all this medley of wriggling dirt is part of God's creation: part, too, of Massingham's solacing and gay exhilaration of country life; part, too, of A.E.'s devotional delusion of the charming little *furry* things playing about in the tall grass when

Withers once more the old blue flower of day.

Sean was beginning to see even here, but nineteen miles from London, that country life wasn't always lovely; just fields of golden corn or bearded barley; or the pungent honey-scent of haymaking; or the lark's loud song. He had come face to face for the first time with a few, out of thousands, of the farmer's enemies. And loathsome things, indeed, a lot of them were; and the fighting farmer couldn't be content, like Sean, to hide, shuddering in the dark: he had to meet them, fight them, destroy them all. These things were enemies of man; enemies of him who walked the paved cities as they were of him who walked where the elms grew and the plough, horse-led or tractor-driven, turned the furrows in readiness for the waiting seed. Later, he was to learn a lot more about the enemies of cultivation, visible and invisible, the mass-produced creations of God, boring and nibbling away the vegetable and animal wealth conjured into existence by man's animated mind and the endless energy of his toiling hands. He had heard of tubercular cattle, had seen an animal swelled and panting with anthrax, a horse twisting and stiffening with tetanus, a hen running round, gasping, its throat eaten away by the pip. Here, on the Amersham road, a farmer, before his face, had dived towards the ground, had caught a turnip fly that had been busy with millions of its kind destroying the turnip crop.

—There's the blasted little bugger! the farmer had said, holding out the squashed speck on the ball of his thumb.

Then there was the rust in the corn, the rats in a thousand barns, the blight on the gooseberry, the mould on the apple tree. Here, and everywhere, a new exorcism was needed, and was being put into practice. A day ago, the Roman Catholic journal, *The Universe*, had reported that a boy, whose name was not given, had been, his parents said, possessed of an evil spirit, which dragged the mattress across the floor while the laddo slept on it, and sent him somersaulting out of a heavy chair whenever he sat in it. This couldn't be allowed to go on, so for thirty days a Jesuit priest, name not given, wrestled with the evil spirit, praying and fasting while he fought the evil thing, each effort bringing a violent outburst from the laddo that shook windows out of houses along the street and made the whole street go zig zag singularly six times running, till, at last worn out, the evil spirit bounded, squealing out of the laddo's mouth, witnessed by a stout Protestant clergyman, name not given, who fainted when he saw the dimensions of the demon steaming away out of the laddo's mouth to disappear into the stenchy curriculum of poor damned things. So these dusty fables, blown about by a sour wind from the middle ages, rise like dust and blur the eyes of some, but settle again soon, to be lost in the ashes of the last stake that flamed around the last sad screaming heretic.

Man is busy now with a new exorcism—the expulsion of disease from man and animal and plant, defending the holy tissue of the flesh from pollution of virus and of bug; the exorcism of fear from man's way of life that he may stand up and speak out and laugh loud. Exorcism that calls for no candle, bell, or book, cassock or stole; a church where the altar is a table, the god, a microscope; the ritual a bold imagination, a peering eye, a ceaseless searching mind; so that health may be sanctity, prayer energy, and the achievements of men and the play of children most acceptable praises to God.

To get rid of all that weakened or brought rot to the body; to sanction pain no more; to coffin nothing but what had lived a life to the full, a life that had no disappointed breath for a sigh at the leaving; a life that sank down, pleasantly tired into the rest-rewarding earth. To give to the commonwealth of man the strong heart, the clear mind, the keen ear, the enduring lung, the bright eye, the stout limb, and the cunning hand—oh, Jesus, wouldn't these things be grand for man to have! Oh, Jesus, wouldn't these be achievements measuring as holy with, and higher than, Salisbury's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey!

Chalfont St. Giles was almost all owned by three families, the Nashes, the Tripps, and the Lanes, all interconnected like the interlacing of an old Celtic illumination; while in the village and on the little heights around, stretching up towards the Little Chalfonts, dwelt the notable, the less notable, and the least notable. The

village and neighbourhood had three religious and three social sects: the gentry, those who thought they were gentry, and all who caught a glow from working for them, went to the dignified Anglican Church; the business people, the higher artisans, and those who worked for the business people, went to the Congregational Church; and the rest, deprived of any chance to pretensions, sought God through the Methodist impromptu prayer and the rollicking, rallying hymn.

The village of a string of cottages, a butcher's, a general store, a newsagent, a small post office and a chemist, had two claims to glory: a stump of an oaktree, right in the way of traffic, where, when it was flourishing, Milton was said to have sat himself on sunny days, and the cottage where he fled to when the plague beset London. Here, it is said, he wrote *Paradise Regained*, and here in this doddering house, looking as if a sneeze would knock it down, some pens and papers, with a few pictures, were set out to bring back to shadowy life a poet long since dead. Everyone in the village knew the cottage, but Sean never met a soul who knew the man's work. Mr. Nash the business lordeen of the place talked once of Edgar Wallace, but went silent when the name of Milton smote his ear; went silent and went away, never speaking a word to Sean again. To all the district around, it was as if Milton had ne'er been born. And no wonder, for to the poets elect of today and to those who garland these poets, Milton's name is one to be forgotten by the wisely-cultured moment. Emotion no longer minded him. The voice that sighed or shouted, the voice that sang with music, was not in a state of grace. Milton found no favour now with the Muses chattering among the cocktails. Now in darkness, and with danger compassed round. Even the fine poet, Eliot, whispered into the ear of the embarrassed Milton, who was being silently pushed about by the quietly-excited crowd—You'd better go, John, for your voice is gone and your vesture's queer. You were too prone to mix with the things poets keep away from: the voices of men throughout the wheeling years but make the present poet's ears ache; for all he worships now's the single self. England hath no longer any need of thee. They no longer serve who only stand and wait; no longer, no. I pray thee, get thee gone; get cracking, man, and go. And no one said hello; and no one asked who's he; and no one said goodbye.

After a year, they moved into a bungalow, which, though of no great shakes, at least was cleaner than the horrible cottage, and was big enough to hold the little furniture they had collected. So when they had settled in, the first question was the choice of a suitable school for Breon, now going on four, and a fine sturdy upstanding lad. Eileen came down at week-ends from her work on the stage in London to sport with him and teach him how to read from nursery rhymes and little books she got for him—a task at which Sean was useless. The boy needed companionship, for, though Sean played a lot with him, and played well, it was a strain,

and not quite satisfactory for either of them. He had played with a little girl and boy of a Cockney couple living in a cottage a few yards away, but the father went to work in a garage miles away, and so, amid many tears, the children had to say goodbye to each other. Where was the boy to go to school? Sean who had gone nowhere and had had to seek knowledge everywhere, didn't know; didn't know anything about the method of educating a child. He left everything to Eileen who decided on a lower middle-class one with modern manners and cheery guidance rather than one whose rule of life was the rule of fear. But it should be a Catholic school, for Eileen since her marriage had been a practising catholic. Having written for it, along came the handsome Prospectus from the Holy Cross Convent School, Gerrards Cross, for boys and girls up to ten. Fine building among trees, charming grounds, spacious rooms, good equipment, and fine fees too. And Sean's funds were very low. But Eileen was very confident; never mind; the nuns would be glad when they heard the father was an author, to take a reduced fee till a play of his got going on a stage. They would be anxious that the boy should be brought up in the Faith, seeing that his father hadn't been born into it, and had never caught it to himself, and such a fine little lad, too; you'll see, Sean. But Sean stayed doubtful. Eileen had been brought up in the lap of the faith, and had learned all she had forgotten from what was taught in the Ursuline Convent, Burgess Hill. Taught primarily to repress the natural vivacity beaming from her nature, an active, imaginative, and humorous mind hidden in a silly and repressive gentility. Till she escaped their consecrated clutches, and found a fuller life in the theatre. All these precious convents did the same service to their pupils: you must grow up into a ladylike person at all costs; refined, reticent, ignorant of life, of its valour and its vehemence. But Eileen was quickly coming to herself: she was developing the rash and lovely confidence which the nuns had dulled; she had a bright eye for paintings; she was at home and hilarious with children; she hadn't the faintest smudge of the snobbery so sedulously plastered over the souls of the pupils in the higher-class convents; she saw through people, and her humorous penetration often burst into a cascade of laughter at the mollies of men and the antics of women. She had a ready ear for conversation, and she was becoming a good judge of plays. But Sean still remained doubtful about the nuns being willing to think of a soul before a fee.

The appointment was made. Eileen dollied herself up and little Breon wore his best tucker and bib, all shrouded over with mackintoshes for the rain was falling furiously. The bus came, and off they went, three in one and one in three—for the Convent; Breon excited, Eileen cool and confident, Sean trying to look hopeful. He was to remain outside; he might disturb things if he came in; say something to rattle the sweet Sisters. Spoil it all. Sean could see by the furrows gathering on Eileen's pretty brow that she was thinking out what to say to the same sweet sisters, potent

help of puzzled christians. Here they were out to bring the boy up in the way he should go. Which way was that, now? The Catholic way, Genevan way. Mahommedan way, or the Buddhist way? These were but a few of the hundred ways carved out under the feet of every stepper-in to life. Eileen chose the Catholic way; a way as good or as bad as any of the others. Sean hoped that when the boy grew up, he'd take and make his own way. The right way to Sean was the desire to see life, to hear life, to feel life, and to use life; to engender in oneself the insistent and unbreakable patience to remove any obstacle life chanced to place in its own way. The way of the world; the way of all flesh: no one could show Breon the way through these ways; he would have to find a way for himself. Life's way of yesterday wasn't life's way today; and life's way today couldn't be life's way tomorrow; so neither Sean's way nor Eileen's way, nor Swann's way could ever be Breon's.

The bus stopped, and they stepped out of it. Here was the Convent of the Holy Cross surrounded by a wall: a fairly high one, too. Private residence of the potential saints. A big black iron gate, semi-circular bars topping it, within the semi-circle the name of Holy Cross Convent in large letters of gold, with all the ironwork and the name crowned by a golden cross: barriers to keep out the Fluther Goods. Hardwood and ironwork without and within.

Open your gates and let us through. Not without a beck and a boo: There's the beck, there's the boo; open your gates and let us through.

Fine grounds, too, now serenaded by the sough of towering pines as their wide tops were sent swinging to and fro by a strong wind; the serenading sough accompanied harshly by a bass droning discord of cawing rooks darkening the soothing sough of the wind-swept trees; while, from the sodden, hodden-grey sky, the rain fell with a rapid drum-beat on leaf, on grass, on pavement, lulling the earth and all that grew there into new activity and freshness.

Eileen opened the heavy gate, and passed through, and the gate closed behind her with a clang. Sean watched the mother through the bars, going up the rain-soaked drive, taking her boy to look indifferently at the cunning light in Christian eyes and the tightened lips of divinity in man when money was in question: taking another step towards the glowing tedium of life's quick march: then he hurried to a telephone booth twenty yards away from the Convent gate, pushed the door open, and went in to shelter from the teeming rain. From a side window, he still saw the stout wall, the iron gate, and the golden cross on top of it. A strong enclosure; fortified place: en' feste burg. How these important christians fence themselves in! The whole appearance of this Convent called out Come in with circumspection, and well clad; or keep out. One couldn't come in to the presence of a bishop or a community of

nuns with a song as you could to God. Imagine Fluther Good, if he happened to be a father, going up this drive, his heavy hand holding the light one of his son; Fluther's shoulders squared, his walk a swagger, his lips forming the words of *The Wedding of Glencree*; on his way to interview the reverend mother.

How much ma'am, for this little fella? How much? Jasus, ma'am that's a lot to charge a chiselur fur his first few lessons, an' making him into an ordinary, ordherly christian man.

No; the little sons and daughters of the Fluther Goods were a long way from the Convents that flourished a golden cross; a long, long trail from the catholic way of this catholic convent. The Catholic way? Is there a widening way to wider thought there: is there the fearless peering into life; is there the loving, immeasurable sweep of the imagination in art, science, and literature in the catholic way? Even in their own particular scheming truth? No, there isn't; not according to Newman, Acton, Duchesne, Dr. McDonald of Maynooth and many more eminent men who suffered and were abused for standing up to truth, giving her honour, and making this daughter of Time their dear sister. The Catholic popular Press is so low and so slimily pietistic that no youngster honoured with a little intelligence would be caught dead reading it. In one of their Journals, there is a weekly sprig of verse so dismally silly, so sentimental, so amazingly kiddish, that all but a pietistic cretin would laugh at it; their libraries as libraries are of no account. This is shown in a letter written by Mabel Jones, Librarian, Catholic Truth Society, Liverpool, who says "Apart from the classics (which are not in great demand unless a film popularises it) the bulk of novels by non-Catholics, which are fit for distribution among catholics, are of ephemeral interest, and are likely to be left dead on the shelves unless great care is taken in their selection. Generally speaking, most of the writers of more serious novels nowadays hold a false philosophy of life, and a dangerous unchristian theory of morals. Thus, with some exceptions, the catholic library is reduced to mystery tales, adventure tales, and love stories of the lighter kind." Mystery tales, detective fiction, and light stories of love, are, then, the high and holy books most catholics read, bar an odd classic when it has been suitably prepared for them by the film magnates. Indeed, it is odd how even some of the theological lights among them aid the common catholic in his quest. G. K. Chesterton was their fiery godfather in this respect, and made a little, moon-faced catholic cleric a prime spyer-out of crime. The moment moonface began to beat his head, one knew, at once, that the criminal was as bad as caught. Then there's Monsignor Ronald Knox spending some of his spare time with a corpse in a culvert, and the quasi-theologian, Dorothy Sayers, making the lord Peter Whimsie into a noddle policeman, catching criminals as a good cat catches mice. Then there is another gentleman of detective fiction, a collegian, who has used his detection talent to harmonise the gospels. He might have spared himself, for a scholarly catholic

cleric told Sean that Ronald Knox's essay on *Watson of Watsonia* "was written as a skit on the compilers of the Higher Criticism of the Bible", whose efforts to prove that the bible was written, not by one, but by many, was shown to be baloney by Knox; for the discrepancies in Doyle's books were as blatant and as many as those in the bible, so that it could be proved that Doyle's stories were written, not by one man, but by many. Maybe by thousands! So we can all rest easy, now, when we read the bible. Knox has made it all quite clear by having a little fun with it, though the Monsignor seems to forget that Doyle claimed no divinity to be hedging in every word he wrote. Indeed, Monsignor's thesis seems to have in it a hint of hiding himself. There seems to come from it what, if someone, other than catholic, had written it, might be a glint of irreverence, making God out to be something of an absent-minded beggar. By implication, it seems to give a picture of the deity trying to remember what had been done, and when it had been done, a couple of million years before. Let me see now: What date was it now when the world was shaped from chaos? Come out, come on, come up here. Were Adam and Eve moulded by hand or made by a *dieu et machina*? There certainly were men in the world before Adam, says the *Catholic Universe*, but they had no souls. What did I tell you, man? They had no souls: that's part of the Lower Criticism of the bible.

They were a damned long time in the Convent, thought Sean, for he was beginning to feel cold. The damp came through into the telephone booth. Looking out of a window on to the world. The rain still fell in sheets, rushing down the glass windows of the booth as if the glass itself was melting. There wasn't a soul in sight, and the little common in front of him was desolate and deserted. A bench on the common, looking as if none were alive to sit on it, seemed to be sensing that the world was dead, and that never again would there be a lover and his lass alive to sit on it. The trees bent over swiftly in the windy gusts, struggling back to their upright pose with labour and great creaking when the gust subsided, ceaselessly chanting the song of their sighing. Only an old crow, heavily flapping its wings through the wind and the rain, lightened the hoden-grey sky, as it cawed resentfully, and winged a clumsy way to the rooky wood, looking like one of the nuns, caught up by a divine wind, and getting carried to heaven without her consent. Indeed, when in their black habits, the nuns looked like a flock of crows, cawing carelessly, too; for they all hummed the same tune in the one key, on the one note, throughout time, in the hope that they might hum the same tune, in the same key, on the same note, throughout eternity.

Thinking a way out of the world to heaven. The city of God. No mean city, by all accounts. O Paradise, O Paradise, who doth not long for rest; so the Roman Catholic and the Protestant sing together. No one does really; certainly not for the rest death brings. All are ready to stick it out here as long as they can. The christ-

ians aren't quite sure about the place above. No one has yet succeeding in suiting the manner of after-existence to man's nature. The christian conception of it is neither pleasant nor inspiring: a dreadful monotony of eternal praise was more than one would wish to inherit. Such a never-ending job would make of immortality a life not worth living. It is said that eternal praise, eternal contemplation, was what God had in store for the saved. Had He? How come? Was it some conceited cardinal, some conceited bishop or even some conceited saint, who, making God out in his own image, thought out this as the way of God?

What did Sean really want of any after-life to take the place of the robe, the harp, the crown, and the eternal confinement in a prison of praise. Well, for a beginning, he'd like a thousand years of life to get to know the peoples of the world so as to be able to enter deeply into their sorrow and their joy, and to encircle them with his arms like a girdle encircling the waist of a motherly woman; and as a step beyond a beginning, another thousand years to study and enjoy the world's plant panorama from the lichens clinging to the deadening wall to the towering redwood trees of California.

The dampness was beginning to circulate through his blood, and stamp his feet how he would, they grew more clammy and numb. He opened the booth door and went out into the teeming rain to stroll, stamping, to the Convent gate. He looked up the drive but saw nothing but the rain dancing about the neatly-gravelled paths; then, when the rain was streaming down him, he saw them, heads bent, running down the drive, the little fellow laughing as he stretched out his legs to keep pace with his mother. —Let's hurry, said Eileen, when she came up with Sean—I'm dying for a cup of tea.

The little bus swept them away from the holy convent, redolent of God's passionate plan for man and the history of the pound note, the secluded building canopied by cawing crows, a dear little, sweet little rookery nook; Eileen chatting away excitedly to Breon, her shapely little mouth clenching into tightness whenever she claimed a pause to rest in silence. That night, when Breon lay in a cosy corner of sleep, Eileen told him all that had happened: the nuns had encircled them smiling, beguiling, giving a welcome to mother and child; welcome as the flowers in May; come into the parlour, dears; stormy weather. Oh, sacred charms of childhood, unto Christ so dear; and, if you bring a proper fee, there's nothing left to fear. Not a thing. One and twenty welcomes to the little lad. A sturdy little fellow. He would be a charming addition to their school, a nun said. And an interesting one, too, considering his father to be a writer, said another nun. Under God, children are the one surety of God's church continuing, said a third nun, laying a partly-blessing hand on Breon's head. You both must stay for tea, murmured the reverend mother, both stay for tea, murmured a nun behind the mother, stay for tea, murmured another behind the nun. Polly put the kettle on, we'll all have tea.

Thank God for tea! What could the world do without it? How did it exist without it? Nobody knows.

I'm sure he'll be happy here, said Eileen, if we can only manage about the fees. Just now we have to ask you to let them down a little, only for the time being; for less than a year at most, perhaps but for a month or two, till a play his father's written struts the stage. The cockrobin confidence died down at once. The sisters grew silent as those who had stood on a peak in Darien. Their hearts stood still. Oh, no; no, Johnny, no. The hands patting the child's head hid away under the folds of the black habit. The good nuns, and they were all good, receded to a safe distance; on retreat. No, no. There was nothing to do but go. An old nun let the mother and child to the door, and bade them a curt goodbye: a never-ending goodbye now. Shut the gate after you! Clang!

While the prudent nuns went on measuring the worth of minds by the fees they brought, Breon took his first step towards organised community life in Longdene School, owned by a young quakeress, a Green Shirt of the Social Credit Party, the little lad unconscious of any educational gain or loss, with Sean sure he was better where conditions placed him. And if it were a loss,

*His loss may shine yet goodlier than their gain
When Time and God give judgement.*

Here in the midst of Jordans, where William Penn lies buried, in the heart of the country where religion paraded the sombre black suit and the steeple-crowned hat, a part of England rich in the dust of those odd quakers famous in their longing for the grace of God and good business; here, quietly, unmolested by either heaven or hell, Breon passed through five energetic years, growing daily in the grace of boyhood and yearly in the wisdom of the oncoming man, learning by experience that the clang of a closing gate is but the clang of another one opening.

PATRICIA LYNCH

THE RUSTY SPADE

JERRY LANAHAN strode through Black Gap with his rusty spade across his shoulder. He was an orphan who belonged to nobody and all he owned was the clothes he stood up in—and the spade.

A dealer at Killorglin Fair had given it to him because he had helped the man when a wheel came off his cart. Jerry had fixed the wheel in five minutes and was strolling off when the dealer called him back.

"Here's an old spade, son!" he said. "'Tis old and rusty, but 'tis the devil to work. Start it right an' ye can take yer ease but—listen now—for every paid job ye do, ye must find another an' finish it out of kindness, for someone that's poor an' misfortunate, or 'twill disappear for ever!"

"A spade's a spade and thank you kindly!" replied Jerry, and off he went, away from the Fair and into the mountain country.

Now darkness was filling the valley: the wind was cold and the clouds heavy. Jerry looked for a cabin or farmhouse where he might spend the night.

He shivered with hunger as much as with cold, for he hadn't eaten since yesterday and then only a crust of stale soda bread and a cold potato. He sang for company.

Out in the wind, the rain and the snow,
The lad with the spade has a hard way to go;

Over the mountain, away from the town,
With the road going up, or the road going down.

Thinking of all the good friends I have made
With me two strong hands and the old rusty spade.

Sure the lad with the spade has a hard way to go.

When Jerry stopped singing he talked to himself.

"All I have is the old spade. It isn't a crock of gold but 'tisn't too bad for me at all! The trouble is to find a paying job. There's lashings of the other kind and I don't begrudge them. But this night I'll not stop nor turn aside till I have a real job—shelter and food and money in me pocket at the end of the week."

He twirled the spade round his head and took a good look at it.

"One of these days I'll give you a grand polish and a slap of paint. Sure, you deserve it!"

For miles the mountain road had been deserted. As he came through the gap Jerry saw a thin woman ahead of him carrying a loaded basket. She leaned to one side with the weight of it, yet walked so swiftly, Jerry couldn't catch up with her till she came to a broken gate in a stone wall.

Beyond was the poorest looking cabin Jerry had set eyes on that day. A few potatoes and cabbages poked up among the rocks, but the path was bordered with white stones and, though the thatch was thin and the window bare, a lighted candle flickered there and the glow of a fire shone over the half-door.

A girl, so thin and pale it was a wonder the wind didn't blow her away, stood looking out with a tabby kitten on her shoulder.

"The kettle's boiling, mammy!" she called. "And look! There's a stranger behind you!"

"I heard him singing, Eily, an' I comin' back from the fair at Ballabeare," said the woman. "His song carried me over the road. Come in, young lad, an' welcome. There'll be a cup of good strong tay an' a cut of hot pratie cake."

"Thank you kindly, ma'am," replied Jerry. "But 'tis a job of work I'm after. I'm a great hand with the spade and I'm as good indoors as out."

She shook her head.

"I'm afeard there's not much doin' in these parts, me poor gossoon. We're all wore out pullin' the Devil be the tail. To be sure there's Minty Mahon needs a lad to make himself useful about the place. Now keep this under your hat—I wouldn't send me worst enemy to Minty. He hasn't a good word or a kind thought for anyone but himself!"

"Would it be far?" asked Jerry.

"Folly the road an' ye'll see Minty's beyond the three fir trees. Good luck go wid ye an' mind, now, make a bargain wid himself before ye sleep under his roof."

"You're very kind!" said the wanderer.

"'Tis sorry I am I can't be kinder," the woman replied.

Jerry walked on, more tired and hungry than ever. Still he sang. It kept loneliness away—

An old rabbit ran
Through the Gap of Dunloe,
Running in fear
From the mist and the snow.
But a little white hare
Who crouched in the sun,
Dreamed of dancing in moonlight
And laughed at the fun.

"Here's the three firs and that must be Mr. Minty Mahon's farm," said Jerry. "It should be snug, but it looks even more starved than the poor cabin up yonder."

The gate was padlocked. Jerry put one hand on the top bar and leaped over.

Hens clustered at the door: a dog peered from a barrel and a lean pig rushed grunting across the yard.

"Mebbe I should go further. I couldn't fare worse be the look of it," thought Jerry, pausing with his back to the gate. "But 'tis a terrible dark night and the legs are giving way under me."

"Is there anyone within?" he called, going up to the door and thumping the post with his clenched fist.

The door was closed. The bare windows were closed, but a trickle of blue smoke blew down from the chimney.

"A cold windy night and a poor fire," grumbled Jerry. "Ah, sure Mr. Minty Mahon is waiting for the hired boy to cut the turf and gather sticks! Now why doesn't he open the door and hire me?"

He beat again upon the door and, while he waited, he patted the dog's head.

There was the noise of a chair being pushed back. Then slow and heavy footsteps approached the door. The upper half swung in and a short, stout man glared at Jerry.

"How dar ye come batterin' at me dure when the house is shut for the night?" he demanded. "Be off out a' that beffore I set the dog on ye."

The dog was rubbing himself against Jerry's legs and whining softly. Besides dogs never attacked Jerry.

"I heard you were wanting a lad about the place, Mr. Mahon," he said. "I've me own spade and I can work as well indoors as out."

"Come in!" growled Mr. Mahon, opening the lower half of the door.

Jerry stepped into the room.

The only light came from a badly built turf fire. Two children sprawled on the floor quarrelling and a stout little woman sat on a very low creepy by the hearth. Jerry saw their eyes glittering as they stared at him.

"Here's a spalpeen wants work!" said Minty Mahon. "See he does it!"

"We haven't made our bargain yet!" Jerry reminded him.

Minty's face was angry. It became angrier. His eyes were always fierce. They grew fiercer. He stuck his fist under Jerry's chin.

"How dar ye argy wid me in me own house?" he asked.

Jerry stepped back so that the fist was no longer under his chin.

"The bargain I always make is—a fair share of what's going round; when I've done me day's work, freedom for myself and me spade, no questions axed and twenty shillings at the end of the week!"

"Pon me soul!" exclaimed Minty. "D'ye think I've found the crock of gold? Of all the impidence! Out ye go! Get away from under me roof!"

"Quit bawlin'!" ordered little Mrs. Minty, from her creeps. "Find out what the lad can do before ye send him packin'!"

"I can do anything that's possible for a spade and a pair of hands!" declared Jerry. "If you're agreeable to me offer I'll stay. If not, I'll take meself off!"

"Pull a chair up to the fire an' sit down!" Mrs. Minty told him. "The wind is from the north. Listen to the roars of it! Besides, where else would ye take yerself to? There's only the Widda Hanlon's an' she hasn't enough for herself an' Eily! Sit down!"

Jerry looked about him. Mr. Minty had settled himself in front of the fire with his legs stretched before him, so there wasn't much space left and he couldn't see a chair. A box was thrust under the table. Jerry pulled it out and put it beside Mrs. Minty.

"Are ye good at cutting the turf?" she asked.

"I am indeed, ma'am!" he replied.

"Or liftin' the praties?"

"None better!"

"I suppose ye're not much of a hand at makin' rushlights?"

"I'd have a dozen fixed while you'd be twisting a spill."

"I wonder now would ye be too proud to rock a cradle?"

"I would not!"

"Then rock—will ye?"

Jerry heard faint cries coming from an old wooden cradle in the corner. He pushed his spade against it, rocking gently and the crying ceased. The two children, who had been pinching each other the whole time, scrambled to their feet and stood beside him.

With his fingers and the handle of the spade Jerry made shadows on the wall. As the fire flared up, he showed a rabbit running from side to side, then a dog and, last of all, a goat dancing on its hind legs. Don and Biddy were delighted.

"More! More!" they shouted.

"That's enough now, till I've had me supper," said Jerry.

"Supper!" cried Minty. "There'll be no supper in this house for a chap that hasn't done a stroke of work!"

"Mabbe I'd as well be on me way," suggested Jerry. "I'll have me supper tonight if I have to dig for it."

"Don't be hasty, young lad," interrupted Mrs. Minty. "There's a good scraping of stew in the pot and a drink of buttermilk in the can on the dresser. That's better than you'd find anywhere else in this poor starving parish. We're the only family in the Glen that has soup every day an' meat on Sundays."

Jerry leaned his spade against the wall behind him and scraped out the pot. There wasn't more than a mouthful, though he scraped and scraped and scraped.

"I may have missed a crumb or two because of the darkness," he thought, "but I doubt it."

The billycan on the dresser was half-filled with buttermilk and he drank it at one swallow.

"Ye'd as well go to yer bed," said Mr. Minty. "The missus will call ye fine an' early."

Jerry climbed the ladder leading to the loft. Luckily the moon had risen and was shining in at the little square window. The bed was a truss of straw in the corner and that was all the furniture.

"Things will have to be altered in these parts," muttered Jerry. "And 'tis meself will have to alter them."

Mrs. Minty called him before dawn. He washed in the icy cold stream and dried himself on a sack. For breakfast he had a big basin of lumpy porridge, without milk or sugar. But this time he was so hungry it tasted almost as well as the eggs and bacon Minty and Mrs. Minty were eating.

The children had the same breakfast as Jerry and he was sorry for them. They were almost as thin as the Widow Hanlon's Eily.

"Meself and the old spade will have to work hard," Jerry told himself.

After breakfast Minty took him out to cut turf, and showed him a patch of bog which hadn't even had the scraws, the rough grassy top, cleared away.

"I'll expect a good stretch of that cut be the time I'm home from market!" declared Minty.

Jerry didn't bother to ask where he would find a slane, but set to work with his old rusty spade.

When Minty came back, tired and bad tempered, he found the turf cut, dried and stacked beside the house.

"Jerry did all that before dinner!" Mrs. Minty told him. "Then he started making rushlights. The childer helped him and we've enough lights for a week."

"Where is he now?" asked Minty.

"He went off towards the Gap."

"Now what would he be doing up there?" muttered the farmer.

"Sorra wan of me knows!" replied Mrs. Minty, folding her hands contentedly in her lap.

"Did he take the spade wid him? I don't see it anywhere."

"An' why would ye?" asked Mrs. Minty, yawning.

Jerry came in as darkness fell. Minty was too miserly and Mrs. Minty too lazy to twist a spill. But Jerry at once took a handful of the rushlights and went towards the fire.

"What made ye take out the spade?" asked Minty.

"Is it take the spade!" exclaimed Jerry. "Now why would I be doing that?"

"Then where did ye lave it?"

Jerry looked surprised.

"Where would I lave it but in its proper place? Look at it there!" he said, pointing.

Minty's mouth fell open. He put his hands on his knees and craned forward to stare at the spade leaning against the wall by the hearth.

"I hope ye'll do a good day's work tomorra after all yer gallivantin'!" growled Mr. Minty.

"I always do a good day's work and I never go gallivanting!" retorted Jerry cheerfully, as he poured himself out a cup of strong tea, spread butter on a cut of soda bread and shared it with Don and Biddy.

Soon the farm showed that a stranger worked there. The crops were hoed, the walls straightened, the roof re-thatched and the turf pile was the biggest the Minty Mahons ever possessed.

Jerry even planted a garden about the house.

Indoors he played with the children. He taught them too. But he would never let them watch him work outside. If they peeped from behind a wall he would stop at once and, though Minty tried to see how Jerry did so much, he never succeeded.

"What harm?" asked his wife when Minty grumbled. "Aren't we the better for his comin'?"

"I'm thinkin we're not the only ones," growled Minty.

Every evening Jerry went off. When no one saw it the spade went too and always, when the hired lad returned there was his spade in its proper place.

One evening Minty followed and saw Jerry go to the cabin beside the Gap.

"'Pon me word, there's changes here!" muttered Minty.

A new stone shed gave shelter to a flock of geese. The potato patch was longer and wider. As well as the cabbage there were onions, carrots and turnips and a wide, high turf pile rose at the back.

"My man doin' other folk's work!" said Minty indignantly. "I never heard the like!"

Although Jerry was inside the cabin, the sound of a spade digging steadily rose from beyond the wall. Minty tiptoed nearer and looked over. The spade was digging away without a hand to guide it. It tapped each rock it rooted out and the rock fell softly in a heap of mould.

"Let me get home outer this!" exclaimed Minty. "I don't at all like what I'm after seeing!"

He rushed down the path into his house. There stood the spade against the wall as if it had never moved!

"When did that spade come back?" he demanded.

Mrs. Minty turned her head.

"Didn't you bring it?" she asked.

"Have ye lost yer wits, woman?" he roared. "Why should I demean meself carrin a spalpeen's spade? Him an' his spade is workin' for the widda an' her daughter an', for all I know, 'tis doin' the same for half the parish. But 'tis meself is payin' that boyo his wages an' feeding him on the fat of the land!"

"What harm, if he does all the work ye put him to?" asked Mrs. Minty.

The next day Minty told Jerry to break the rocks in the strip

beyond the garden and to plant the land with cabbages.

"That's a long job, mister," said Jerry. "But meself an' the little old spade will do what can be done!"

Minty went off to the Fair, quite sure he had given Jerry enough to keep him occupied for days. Yet when he came home earlier than usual there wasn't a rock to be seen and the cabbages were standing trim and erect in straight rows.

When Jerry was working indoors the children stayed with him and the baby crawled at his heels. He brought them sweets and toys, told them stories and sang all the songs he knew. He painted the woodwork and whitewashed the walls until Mahon's became a farm to be proud of.

But Minty was not satisfied.

"Who does the work up at the Widda's?" he asked himself. "Then there's the Doyles! When did old Doyle build a bridge across the stream to let him cross dryshod? And who raised the wall back of the O'Briens so that the wind no longer blows the life out of the place? All down the Glen there's work bein' done and nobody knows who does it. But I have me suspicions!"

After the evening meal when Jerry strolled off, hands in his pockets, singing to himself, Minty Mahon put his chair close to the spade. He was determined not to take his eyes from it. But he would sneeze, or cough, or blink, and there was its place as empty as before the day Jerry walked in on them. Still he watched until his eyes would be closing with sleeplessness and there was the spade back again!

"If I owned that spade," thought Minty, "I'd not need a hired man."

The next day he went into Ballabeare and bought a new spade. He laid it on the floor under the settle bed and, when Jerry's spade followed its master, Minty put the new one in its place.

"Now we'll see what happens!" he said, rubbing his hands. "If I give a new spade for an old one Jerry won't dar refuse me!"

"Why wouldn't you leave well alone?" asked his wife.

But Minty never could do that.

He was dozing when a thud and a clatter made him sit up, wide awake.

Jerry's rusty old spade had returned and had flung the new one on the floor. Now it danced up and down, its sharp edge cutting into the handle of the new one. Soon this was in three pieces. Jerry's spade kicked them into the fire and sent the shining blade itself spinning out through the door.

At once Jerry came rushing in.

"Who's interfering with me spade?" he shouted.

"Sure I didn't like to see ye workin' wid that rusty old thing!" exclaimed Minty. "So I bought ye a new one. I—"

The spade made a rush at him. But Jerry caught it by the handle.

"Listen to me now," said Jerry. "Next time a lad comes here

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and works hard and is civil to everyone concerned, lave him be! If he has a fancy for doing a good turn to the neighbours, mind yer business. Now I'm off—I'm sorry to part from the childer and I wish the baby could come with me—but 'tis your doing! Goodbye ma'am. I'm afeard you'll have to make your own rushlights, or sit in the dark. One good thing—I'll never set eyes on Minty Mahon's cross face again!"

He put his spade on his shoulder and strode through the open door.

They could hear him singing—

If I were a fiddler
I would be
The very best fiddler
You could see:
I'd play from morning
Until night,
I'd play the whole world
Out of sight:
I'd play lost tunes
And fairy reels,
Till old and young
Kicked up heir heels;
And best of all
That ancient song
Which makes us happy
All life long.

As the song faded in the distance Mrs. Minty sighed.

"He'll come back for his supper! Make him a fresh pot of tea!" said Minty.

"We'll never set eyes on that lad again!" she declared mournfully.

They never did. When all the rushlights Jerry had made were used up they once more sat in darkness. The whitewashed walls became dirty, the walls about the garden fell down and the weeds came back. But the children remembered the stories and the songs he had taught them.

Sometimes when the Widow Hanlon and Eily are knitting and reading by the fire, they think they hear a spade digging and rush out. Up to the present time it's only been the wind shifting a light sod or beating against the shed door.

PADRAIC COLUM

EAST AND WEST

YOUNG GIRL : ANNAM

I am a young girl,
And I live here alone;
I write long letters
But there is no one

For me to send them to; my heart
Teaches me loving words to use,
But I may repeat them only
In the garden to the tall bamboos.

Expectantly I stand beside the door; I raise
The hanging mat, I,
The letter folded, look out
And watch shadows of the passers-by.

In the garden the fireflies
Quench and kindle their soft glow;
I am one separated,
But from whom I do not know.

YOUNG GIRL : ACHILL

I'd bring you these for dowry:
A field from heather free,
White sheep upon the mountain,
And calves that follow me.

I saw you by the well-slope
Upon Saint Finnian's Day;
I thought you'd come and ask for me,
But you kept far away.

Oh, if you ask not for me,
But leave me here instead,
The petticoat in dye-pot here
Will never fast its red

For me, beside the well-slope,
To wear on Finnian's Day:
My dress will be the sheet bleached there,
My place, below its clay.

BRYAN GUINNESS

ON THE EDGE

THE young lawyer, on his holiday, trawled a spinner in the wind-swept lake behind him. He trailed his thoughts behind him also, like a coat waiting to be caught under the surreptitious footfall of melancholy. His wife and his two children and his sister-in-law awaited him at the inn a few miles away by the sea. It had been the happiest of times, the most absolute of rests. Only the boat drifted on through a suspicion of rain; only the spinner trawled along through the grey waters; only his uninterrupted thoughts trailed after him in a faint cloud of sadness.

Why was it so pleasant to do nothing? Because he was usually out of sympathy with what he did? He felt a kind of intellectual indigestion from the endless details of other people's affairs: what good did it do to help them in their greedy, grasping insistence on their rights against others, or in their feeble struggles to defend their little businesses against the State—efforts as futile as the kicks of a dying rabbit.

He fought no great causes. What great causes were there to fight? He invented nothing; he grew nothing; he only made a competence, earned it honestly but uncreatively: opened letters, answered letters, endlessly, 'Dear Sir.....,' 'Dear Sir.....,' until the business phrases haunted his brain even here as he fished in the silence of the hills.

The sacrifice of a salmon's life might perhaps have saved his own, by giving him a sense of achievement which could have dispelled the cloud of disappointment that hung over him, like the black clouds on the hill-tops, less perhaps on account of his empty basket than at the prospect of his holiday's end; but no salmon was so foolish as to look out of the water on such a grey and wintry day.

Towards evening he decided to give up, and persuaded his taciturn boatman to make for the shore. He had only himself to blame for the man's silence, having received his stories with an ill-grace in the morning, and having suggested absurdly that too much coffee-housing might disturb the fish.

On a hint the boatman began his talk again; but it was only to tell him of skills neglected, and ways forgotten; of the language fading from men's minds; of the old people dying, and the young emigrating, till soon there would be no one left in the whole countryside.

"So that your congested district becomes your depopulated area," commented the young lawyer neatly to himself, as he ate a sodden sandwich on the way to the shore.

After the drive along hillsides spread with a bright green quilt.

of fields, stitched here and there with a golden pattern of whins, he came back to the inn by the sea. Tea was pleasant by the fire, his wife rocking the little wicker cradle, while the other child played round the room, and his sister-in-law knitted in the corner. But there was a restlessness in him, a discontent, perhaps from lack of exercise he thought.

"I think I'll take a bit of a walk on the island," he said, and set out over the stretch of beach which joins the island to the shore. His feet floundered in the dry sand that blew up into his face, until he reached the closely cropped grass beyond, where three black Kerry cows stood and stared at him with large reproachful eyes.

Perhaps his discontent lay in the nagging, gnawing realization that his holiday was over: that tomorrow the journey across Ireland and back to London must begin; and that in a few days must follow the desperate struggle to catch up with arrears of correspondence, the hectic rush to fill up his clients' neglected forms, the urgent need to make endless returns for the payment of unending taxes, to master in all their details hundreds of uninteresting affairs, to overload his brain with facts, facts, facts, until all vision was clouded, all serenity shattered.

He saw himself drowning in a welter of materialism, choked by the complexity of other people's affairs, dragged remorselessly down in a jangle of telephone bells, and a pattering of typewriters.

The wind caught him as he came round the corner of a rock. The waves, rolling up against the shore, roared as they broke in rows upon the beach. The wind was so strong that it blew a fine white spray backwards out to sea from the crest of the waves as they ran inwards.

The young lawyer huddled his great-coat round him and wondered if a sailor's lot of drowning suddenly in the majestic element before him was not to be preferred to his own, stifled by a slow suffocation of the spirit.

He walked on through the heather and over the peaty turf that squelched under his shoes. The scent of the golden whins blew across his path in a delicious harmony which his nose analyzed into two notes, as it were, of perfume—one higher and one lower, joined in a chord of overwhelming delight.

There passed over his head in the gathering dusk the sinister figure of a cormorant on the wing. He remembered how Satan had taken such a form in Paradise Lost. He was tempted to think well of the Prince of Darkness as the champion of the lost cause of the individual against the omnipotence of universal benevolence, and the busy form-filling figures of the recording angels.

He went on past the mouth of what he believed was known as the Cave of the Silk from the old smuggling days: away on the other shore was the Cave of the Tobacco, and across the bay the Cave of the Brandy. It might well be that, in the days of Daniel O'Connell's eighteenth century uncles, there had been too much

individualism, and that the romance that lingered in these smuggling names was perhaps a poor cloak for an age of disorder and starvation, of oppression, ignorance, and discontent.

He began to tire of the buffets of the wind. He decided to turn homewards, and hugged the shelter of a little hill with such care that he lost his sense of direction and came unexpectedly on the opening known in Irish as the Cave of the Dog. There was some story he could never quite follow of a greyhound in full cry after a hare that plunged over the edge and was never seen again.

That was the way to die, thought the young lawyer—dashed to pieces, blotted out, on the top of his form, fearless, thinking of the aim only, not counting the cost, soaring Icarus-like through the air.

He thought of his elder brother, killed in the war. He thought of all the heroes he knew. He hated himself for not being dead, for lingering on to plague his clients with his forgetfulness, and his wife, his sweet long-suffering wife, with his bad temper.

He made his way along the side of the chasm, not going too near the edge, hearing the waters come thundering in below him. He came to where the open sea lay before him, dashing itself against the rocks and flinging itself upwards from them again and yet again towards the lowering sky.

He sat awhile listening to the sad crying of the gulls, while the wind tugged him always backwards away from the edge of the abyss. "It's just as well," he thought, "that I'm on this side and not on the other, as there if I lost my balance the wind might topple me over the edge!"

And then he turned on himself for a coward: it was always the best who were taken. If, like his brother, he had plunged into the thickest of the battle, instead of letting himself drift with the currents that had kept him on the fringe of the fighting, he too might have gone out in a blaze of glory.

The sight of a group of turnstones on a rock in the sea below him brought his thoughts down to a less dramatic level. Now and then a wave broke against their rock. They fluttered their wings, hovered in the air until the waters had run over their platform, and then resumed their positions. This friendly little group seemed to him to symbolize his existence with his wife and family.

But out to sea a gannet swooped and swerved till suddenly it dived and, with hardly a splash, was nobly obliterated.

If he were to plunge over the edge now, like a gannet, he could still at a single stroke make up the unfavourable balance between his romantic ambitions and his prosaic achievements. His wife was provided for, and would find a better mate than she tolerated with self-deceiving affection in him. None would know that his foot had not slipped. But *he* would know, and with one blow *he* would have abolished the endless pettifogging details of other people's affairs, and escaped the endless thirst of the State's officials for information, always more facts, more calculations, until thought.

was warped and feeling numbed.

As he approached the edge and looked across the swirling waters, he saw that he had never learnt to tread upon the light: that he had never taken the step that leads to greatness: that he had never launched himself out from the baseness of the earth.

One pace would be enough, and he would be the equal of Empedocles on Etna.

Of course this was all a game, a fantasy. He could see the window behind him glowing with a kindly light from the room in which his wife sat with the baby beside her in its cradle.

One pace only, and he would join the little band of the great who had known how to conquer mortality and walk straight into the world of the spirit.

There was something fascinating about this train of thought. he told himself: he must go on to the very edge and play it out to its fullest extent.

The waters thundered on against the black jags of the rocks. The clouds gathered overhead. The evening was closing in. The wind blew, and blew, and blew again still more strongly. The only colour was the green translucency of the waves before they broke: the only brightness, the whiteness of the foam that dashed up towards him again and yet again.

It was time to go in. It was unpleasant to look too steeply down. There was really a danger that he might be seized with vertigo, might slip, might fall, might throw himself over. Only the wind blew him back from the edge. And there was always the edge between himself and the abyss.

But if he were to raise his leg in the air as though to step over the edge, then he would see what it was like, then he would know what Empedocles felt on Etna.

Once in a theatre he had thought about prodding the back of a bald man's head, and his hand, without his knowing, had risen to touch it: once in a car his finger had likewise risen without his knowledge to poke a ridiculous dimple in the knee of a woman who was almost a stranger to him. On both these occasions his unintentional behaviour had led him into difficulties. But now his leg was free, free as the spume that flew in round white flecks over his head.

Up rose his foot: this must surely be the limit of the game: no, it came down and the other foot followed it. He saw at last that he was in the grip of something mightier than himself. He found himself walking on into light, and his legs, as he fell, cut the air like a pair of scissors.

DESMOND CLARKE

EAMONN

HE'S possibly dead now, so no words of mine can hurt him, or even cast about him a halo of immortality. Those who knew him intimately, more intimately than I did, are possibly dead too, or have not sufficient interest in his memory to scratch their heads and say rather dimly, "Och, I mind him alright; a 'quare' poor fellow he was." Yes, indeed, a 'quare' poor fellow, but still.....

It was on the road a little before Barna I first met him. I remember the day well, a hot, sultry summer's day, with the sun pouring down on the dusty, humpy road, a glass-like curtain of heat reaching from the sky. He was walking ahead of me, a tall hulking fellow with a cloud of dust at his heels. I didn't know who he was; he was simply six foot of bone and leanness, dressed in a rough tweed trousers with thick seams down the side, a white bawneen, and he wore a nondescript cap pulled askew on his head. He was tall as I remarked, awkward and ungainly. There was a twig of straw between his lips. His face, thin and bronzed, covered with a beard of many days growth, was singularly simple and placid, child-like really. There was a dreamy distant expression in his eyes as though he did not belong to this world at all, or at least had little or no interest in it.

He was talking to himself as I came along beside him, and he continued to do so for quite a while, oblivious of me. Then he seemed to notice me for he ceased talking. He saluted by touching the peak of his cap. "God and Mary be with you," he said.

I returned his salutation in Gaelic, and continued my journey in his company.

"Tis a grand day, thanks be to God," he said, his gaze fixed steadily on the road before him.

"It's all that, thank God," I agreed.

As we walked along I tried hard to keep step with him, but after a while I gave it up as a bad job for his gait was peculiar to himself. He took long slovenly steps lifting first one shoulder and then the other in a kind of harmony with the movement of his feet. His boots I could see were badly worn, and dust-whitened as though he had travelled a great distance.

I asked him had he come from Barna direction. He shook his head and said something about it being only a stone's throw away, then, somewhat confidentially, he informed me that he had walked all the way from Screeb. That puzzled me quite a bit. Why Screeb was in the opposite direction altogether! That being the case he must have wandered over half the countryside and found himself back on the shore road again. I was glad I said nothing to him though, for it slowly dawned upon me that there was something strange and odd about my companion.

Very serious and with a deep hushed kind of voice he began

to tell me all he knew about fairies, banshees and such-like. Of course most of the people from about these parts knew about fairies but they did not speak about them as though they were familiar objects. I listened, just interjecting a cautious remark now and then to show I was interested. Sometimes I understood what he was talking about, but often as not I was utterly bewildered, lost in a fog of chaotic mumblings. However, I was glad of the stranger's company for with him the long dusty road before me seemed much shorter.

When we separated he bade me a hearty good-day, and wished me luck on the rest of my journey. The road he took branched to the right and I stood for quite a while watching the big ambling figure disappear.

That was the first time I met Eamonn; what his other name was I do not know. He was just Eamonn to most people though some referred to him as *Eamonn Cnuic*—Eamonn of the hill. After that we met often and he and I became friends. In time I realised that he was a little touched, as we say, though I much prefer the expression of his own neighbours who remarked kindly and charitably that he was *Duine le Dia*—a person of God.

To me at least he was interesting, a strange, unusual kind of fellow, but to his neighbours he was just a local oddity, a simple, harmless fellow living alone in a rain-damp cottage by the foreshore. They saw him almost every day and beyond bidding him the time and exchanging a word or two with him they had little interest, indeed at times some of them must have thought him a nuisance.

He did not do any regular work that I know of; in fact he didn't even bother to plant a few potatoes or turn up a bit of ground for cabbages in the little patch about his house. He spent most of his time leaning over the bit of a stone wall outside his cottage or hanging about the village talking to anybody willing to talk to him. Of an evening he would drop into any house that was handy, take a corner seat by the fire and suck his old clay pipe in peace, but always making sure to get home before it was quite dark.

Then, at times, for no reason at all Eamonn would disappear completely. There would be neither sign nor light of him for a week or maybe ten days.

Nobody was unduly perturbed when Eamonn disappeared; his disappearance was always taken as a matter of course. Nobody worried thinking he might be sick or dead in the makeshift bed in the corner of his kitchen. Nobody worried or said anything because everybody knew that he would be back again in due course. True enough he would suddenly appear in the village with a thick growth of beard on his lean face, and there was always a hungry look about him. Where he had been, what he had been doing was nobody's concern but his own, and his simple facile explanation was always the same: he had been away with the fairies—well, maybe he had.

When I first missed Eamonn I was a little worried; I was not used to his strange ways. I spoke to the local schoolmaster, Mr. Breathnach; he only laughed. "I wouldn't worry about him for

IRISH WRITING

I think he has a drop of tinker's blood in him that sets him travelling the road. He's a harmless simple fellow and he'll be back as sure as I'm standing here in a day or two just as if nothing happened at all. By the way," said Breathnach, looking at me quizzically, "did he try to sell you his horse yet?"

I assured Breathnach that he hadn't; I didn't even know he had a horse. Breathnach wagged his head up and down and laughed loudly.

Sure enough when Eamonn returned, and I was more than a nodding acquaintance of his, he drew me aside and whispered in my ear. "Eh, now, would you like to buy t'oul' horse from me?"

A little bit down the road a black and white Connemara pony, thin and rather scrawny, grazed blissfully by the roadside.

"Is that your pony?" I asked.

"Sure it is, every bit of it," he said, jerking his head to one side. "Sorra finer horse in the country and there's many of the gentry 'id give the two eyes outa their heads for him. It's that knowledgeable that you've only to whisper in his ear and he'd take wherever you want to go. That's a fact now, true as I'm standing here."

I assured Eamonn that I believed everything he said but at the same time I pointed out that I was a city man and that it wasn't by any means easy to keep a horse in the city.

That Connemara pony of Eamonn's had been offered for sale many times, but it remained Eamonn's property for as long as I knew him. There was nothing wrong with the pony beyond being a little underfed, though there may have been some doubts as to how Eamonn acquired it. Still, he hadn't the slightest intention of selling the pony, and if, as occasionally happened, somebody did ask about the price the figure quoted by Eamonn was so outlandish that the sale was more or less stillborn.

Year after year when I returned to my old western haunt Eamonn was always there to greet me, part of the local landscape. He always grinned when he saw me, a simple though perhaps foolish grin, but it was evident, very evident that he was glad to see me.

Once he volunteered to come home with me after dark. He was a little afraid and confessed he always saw things in the dark, things that "frickened" him, as he said. What the "things" were I do not know; Eamonn didn't seem to quite know himself, so there was no sense in pressing the matter and attempting some clarification.

Then one night, I remember it clearly for it was the last night I saw Eamonn alive, we were sitting in Breathnach's kitchen. There was myself, Breathnach, old Phil Purcell, the good lady of the house and Eamonn sitting in the corner. We talked and smoked and drank tea which Mrs. Breathnach brewed for us. All the while Eamonn sat quietly in the corner, a dead pipe in his mouth and his eyes closed, or at least half closed. He hadn't a word out of him at all which was unusual since for the most part he could talk away like the best of us.

Even when somebody remarked casually that he seemed to have lost his tongue he had no comment to make. Then Breathnach suggested in a matter-of-fact serious way that perhaps Eamonn was thinking of leaving us and spending a while with the fairies. "I could do worse," Eamonn said, and his voice sounded strange for nobody thought he was paying the slightest heed to what we were saying.

It was getting very late, not far short of midnight. Old Phil Purcell had gone home and the woman of the house had retired to bed. It was time for me to go and I was wondering when Eamonn would stir or was he going to make a night of it. Just then Eamonn shook himself as though a cold shiver had passed through his body. He looked queerly at Breathnach and myself, but said nothing. He was in a strange dour unfriendly kind of mood that night.

He began to feel around in his pockets, looking for something; at length he drew out an old bone-handled penknife, and, leaning over the fire, he stuck the blade squarely in a burning sod of turf. With the sod firmly impaled on the blade of his knife he left the kitchen without a word to either of us, holding the burning sod aloft as though it were a lantern.

I got up from the seat by the fire and stood outside the door drinking in the fresh night air. Breathnach came and stood with me. "Gorra, he's in a quare silent mood tonight."

"Yes," I said.

"Afraid of the dark, he is. Thinkin' the bad fairies will get him or some other nonsensical notion. Duine le Dia without a doubt."

A long winding bohereen stretched down from Breathnach's house to the main road; it ran away downhill for a mile or more, twisting and turning between rough stone walls. I stood for a while longer till my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, and then in the distance below me I saw a red glow above the walls. It was Eamonn's burning sod.

Bidding Breathnach good-night I set off quickly down the bohereen, sometimes losing the glimmer of red light in a dip in the bit of a road, and then seeing it again moving round the winding contours of the bohereen. I was slowly overtaking the light for I was walking very quickly despite the rutted ground underfoot. Then I noticed the light move erratically up and down for a second or two and disappear. When I saw it again it was moving away across the fields to my right, moving more or less steadily in the direction of the bog above Brosna. Eamonn was off to the fairies, and it was the last I ever saw of him.

A year later when I returned there was no Eamonn and the rain-sodden cottage where he had lived was a shelter for cattle. The good people round about said he died of pneumonia following a chill. Be that as it may, Eamonn has passed from this world, and if there are fairies up above, and there must be, for he said they were good people, he is a happy man.

CONSTANCE MADDEN

LAST NIGHT YOU PASSED BY

Last night you passed by
As slow as the shadows,
And your thoughts were all drenched
With dreams of her promise.
But my window was laced with tears
At your passing
And you never came in
And my heart on you fasting.

And you never came in
And the weary night waiting.
But my heart is as deep
As the grass of her grazing.
O count up her fat cows
My soul feeds on tears.
But lonely to-night waits
And lonely the years.

REARDEN CONNER

THE MAN WHO HATED ILLNESS

ALL his life he had been a strong man, rich in health, hating illness and a little contemptuous of it. He had worked out of doors in all weathers, without as much as an ache or pain. He had never worn an overcoat until he had passed middle-life and his hands knew nothing of the feel of gloves.

He had taken his health for granted, without pride in it, conscious only of bewilderment when one of his fellows failed beside him because of an ailing body. "The man has no will," he would say, "no will at all. He folds up before a puff of wind!"

When his wife was in her sixty-fifth year, with their four children married and moved to distant places, she lay down on their old double-bed for the last time and he could see the sickness of death in her eyes. It was something that he could feel had come over her and yet could not understand. He tried to grope towards it, but it baffled him. It was alien to the strength in him, to the fierce determination to endure, to the urge to go on and on tilling his stretch of land, the urge that he felt should be in her, also.

When he was in his seventieth year the first shaft of real pain struck at him. It seemed to rise up out of the ground and tear into him as he slid from his bed in the early hours. "Ah, the devil take it!" he muttered. "I must be getting an old man!"

The leg was stiff when he tried to walk, but the pain did not come again. "Ha!" he said to himself. "It's the will-power in me that scares it away. An old man did I say? By crikey, I'll never get old. They'll have to get an axe to me in the end!"

He pottered around the kitchen, preparing a meal for himself, happy enough in doing his simple tasks. "Maybe I've been alone too long?" he rambled as he worked. "Maybe I should take another wife?"

The thought intrigued him. He looked into a little square mirror that hung beside the shelf where the tea-caddy rested. He saw a wrinkled, whiskered face, a nose that was large and red from exposure to the wind, and two small eyes that reminded him of a ferret's. Wisps of white hair clung to his pate, and his scalp shone out between them as if it had been polished.

"Ho! Ho!" he said, baring his tobacco-stained teeth. "What woman would have me now? She'd have to be blind in both eyes. She'd have to be at the end of her tether all right. I'm done for, be the janey, as far as the ladies are concerned!"

After he had eaten he went out into his garden and began to work. His legs felt firm and sturdy under him. His body was alive with energy and his muscles seemed as supple as those of a young man. He dug in the garden and he was proud of the way

he could handle a spade. He could work for hours, bent over the earth, without feeling a single twinge in his back. When he straightened up he took great gulps of the keen air of early spring and he listened to the birds fluting their mating songs, quivering with pleasure as the urgency of the liquid notes entered into him. "Life is a wonderful thing after all," he said to himself, "and a man need never be lonely if he has a pair of ears to his head."

In the evening the pain came again, taking him unawares, searing into him abruptly. "Bad luck to it!" he cried. "You'd think it was a red-hot needle I had in my leg." He took off his boot and sock and examined the leg carefully. The coarse hair on it grated under his fingers as he massaged it, but the flesh felt firm. "Maybe if it had a rub of the bottle," he told himself, "it would soon stop its antremartins."

His wife, who had suffered from rheumatics, had been a great believer in "the bottle". He found the oily liquid in the darkest corner of a press and rubbed the skin of his leg briskly. The pain stole up towards the knee and rested there in a knot. He nursed the knee tenderly as he sat before his fire until the pain had died away and he was drowsing in his chair.

On the second day the leg was so stiff that he found difficulty in walking. The pain was severe, fixed in the leg like a rigid bar that made movement almost unbearable. He was angry now because he was forced to abandon his plan of work. He sat before his fire, stewing tea, and brooding, thinking of the days when he had walked and run for miles at a stretch. He held the leg close to the fire, craving heat from the leaping flames, but the flesh remained cold with a curious, dull persistence that frightened him.

On the morning of the third day the leg had gone numb. But the pain had intensified, and now, with a start of horror, he realised that it was beginning in the second leg. Fear gripped him. "Holy jumping jackasses!" he said aloud. "I'll be as useless as an old crone if I go on like this!"

He was aghast at the thought of age stealing up on him so suddenly. "I know what I'll do," he said. "I'll go out and work. That'll be the cure for it. Hard work. The best medicine for any man!"

He managed to reach his garden by a tremendous effort of his will. He seized the spade, but his legs refused to respond. He tried again and again, but he could not lift his right leg from the ground. "Mother of God!" he cried out. "Am I going to be paralysed?"

He felt sweat springing out on his forehead and trickling down his cheeks, the cold sweat of fear. He stood, staring down at the earth, swaying on his feet. After a while he went back into the house and flopped on to a chair. When he had rested, determination returned to him. "It'll be gone before the day is out," he told himself. "It's no good trying to fight it. I'll lie down on the bed, and in the morning I'll be as lively as a young colt."

He managed to reach his bed and he lay down, fully dressed. He slept soundly, overcome by fatigue. In the late evening he awoke to find himself wracked by hunger. Darkness had come and lay heavily in the room. The darkness unnerved him, made him feel lost, as if he had wandered into a strange limbo-like world. He struggled out of bed and fell on the floor. "Light.....light..." he was muttering. "I want light!"

He knew that his terror came only from the darkness, because it seemed to him that he was peering into the gloom of death already. His body was torn with pain. The pain was like a fire that seemed to be licking at his nerves in little tongues of flame.

He forced himself upright and thrust out his arms as if he were fighting off the pain. He groaned long and loudly, but his hands kept groping for a candle. When he had found it and had lit it he looked around the room slowly, winning comfort from the sight of familiar objects. He drew in a deep breath and faced towards the door. "It must be the rheumatics!" he said to himself. "It can't be anything else. Maybe it was the wetting I got coming home from the last fair. I'll have to work hard with the bottle."

But the bottle was useless against the pain. The old man sat and nursed his legs before the empty hearth and grumbled viciously because he had not the strength to go outside in search of wood and turves. When he had sat for almost an hour he felt hunger ravaging him again. He had bread in the press and he managed to reach it. He ate chunks of it until the animal ache of hunger was eased, then he returned to his chair before the hearth because he was afraid that if he lay down on the old double-bed once more he would never rise from it.

In the morning a young, fair-haired tinker came to the door of the house. He lifted the latch and poked his head round the jamb of the door. He saw the old man sprawled in a weary slumber in the chair. He tip-toed into the kitchen, looked around him carefully as if wondering what he could steal, then his gaze rested on the old man once more.

The old man had awakened by this time. His eyes cold and staring, were fixed on the tinker. He was watching the youth as if he were a visitor from another world, watching him intently, nervous of the strong, young body and of the narrow face and eager eyes. "What do you want in my house?" he demanded. "Why do you come in on me like this and I fast asleep?"

"Are there any kettles or pots that you want mending?" he heard the young tinker ask.

"There are not."

"Have you an ass to sell, young or old?"

"I have not, and if I had you haven't the money to buy it."

"I've walked a long way and I'm a hungry man. Would there be a bite of food in the house?"

The old man tried to rise from the chair, but he was unable to move. Pain shivered through him. He felt it flicker up through

his limbs to his brain so that, for a moment, the figure of the young tinker grew blurred. "There's food in the press over there," he said at last, "and there's water in the well outside. If you can get a fire going and can cook you're welcome to your fill."

The young tinker was astounded. "Where is the woman of of the house?" he asked.

"She's in her grave."

"And the children of the house?"

"They're hundreds of miles away. Will you shut your gob now and get on with the fire."

After the fire had been burning for some time, and when they had eaten and drunk, the old man said, in a fierce tone, "It's a fine day. Spring is here at last and the earth is hungry for seed. I have work to do. Do you hear that? Will you help me out now to the garden so that I can get the last of the ground dug?"

There was humiliation behind his fierceness and the young tinker sensed it. "It looks to me," he said, "as if you're a sick man."

"I'm no sicker than you are!" the old man snapped. "It's just that my legs have played tricks on me. It's the blasted rheumatics, I tell you. You have a strong hand, and maybe when the work is done you'll give them a rub of the bottle?"

He tried to rise from the chair, but he was helpless. The young tinker clutched him, lifting him erect. The old man swayed on his feet, trying desperately to move towards the door.

"You're not a fit man," the young tinker was saying to him, "you should be in your bed. If you'll tell me where the doctor lives I'll go and fetch him."

"If you do I'll break your neck!"

"Then what about the neighbours? Isn't there a kindly woman around here?"

"They're scoundrels all of them. They'd skin a flea for its hide. They have idle tongues that thrive on gossip. Let them rest. Go out now and feed the hens."

"I will in a minute."

"And the pig in the sty. You'll find the meal in the press."

"I'll do my best."

"And take me back to my bed. There's a queerness over me. But it'll pass.....it'll pass....."

The pain was fierce in the old man's body now. It drove sleep away from him. He tried his best to twist and turn in the bed, but his legs were powerless. "Glory be to God," he said aloud "I'm like a cripple!" He trembled at the thought and he prayed fervently.

He could hear the young tinker moving around the kitchen. "Bring me a drop of tea!" he shouted. "I have a terrible thirst on me!"

It was true. He felt he could not drink enough to slake the fever burning in his throat. Sweat was pouring from his body under the light covering of clothes. It was the sweat of terror. He was

battling against the realisation that was growing deep within him. "Only a week ago," he said to the tinker, "I was hopping around like a sparrow."

"It's the will of God."

"Did you feed the hens?"

"I did."

"And the pig?"

"I gave her a fine dollop of meal."

"How is she? Is she fattening well, do you think?"

"She's as fat as a cow."

Suddenly the old man stretched out his arms. "I'm not going to die!" he shouted. "I tell you I'm not going to die!"

"Be easy," the young tinker said. "Of course you're not going to die. If you'll only let me skelp down the road for the doctor you'll be on your highlows again in a day or two."

"If you do, I'll cut the gizzard out of you. Where in the world did you come from? Are you a man from the south?"

"From the south, yes, and the north, too. I wander the roads, and I like it that way. There's no place I belong to."

"Will you sit down now and tell me the stories you heard on the road?"

The young tinker sat and told the old man the stories of the road. After an hour the old man grew drowsy, despite the pain. He slept on his back, and with his mouth drooping open, snoring loudly.

The young tinker moved around the house, searching here and probing there with the curiosity of youth. When the old man awoke it was late in the afternoon. Shafts of sunlight were creeping into the room. The whole place seemed to be filled with yellow light. The sight of the warm glow sent a throb of life through him. "I must work...work..." he said to himself. "I can't lie here like a finished man. I'll be a wreck if I don't get a move on!"

He opened his mouth and shouted, "Where the devil are you?" The young tinker came running. "Take me out to the garden!" the old man commanded.

"But you're only fit for your bed!"

"Put your hands under my back now and have no more talk out of you!"

They struggled for a few minutes, and the old man managed to heave his legs on to the floor. He fell heavily, lying sprawled at the foot of the bed.

"You'll get your death if you don't listen to reason," the young tinker said.

He bent and lifted the old man back into the bed again. "I have the kettle on the fire," he said, "I'll soon get you a hot drink to liven you up."

It was the same when the morning came. The old man insisted that it was time for him to work. He fought desperately to reach the door of his room, but the pain overwhelmed him, battering

at him and weakening him so that he was almost senseless.

"I'm at your mercy now," he said to the young tinker when he had recovered his breath. "Are you eating me out of house and home?"

"Well you know that I'm not."

"Are you looking after the hens?"

"I am. And the pig, too. They're in a better condition than you are."

"So well they might be. That pig came from the finest sow in this part of the country."

Towards mid-day the young tinker went to the old man and said, "There's no more food in the house. What am I going to do if you don't let me get the neighbours for you?"

The old man looked at him with tired eyes. "I'm going to trust you, son," he said. "And it's right to call you 'son', for you've been like a son to me for the past two days. It's the holy truth that you've done more for me than flesh of my flesh, and they away from me now in my hour of need. Go out into the kitchen and you'll find money wrapped in an old cloth in a jar at the back of the press. And may God never forgive you if you rob an ailing man!"

The young tinker went out to the kitchen and found the money in the press. He was astonished at the number of notes hidden in the jar. There were over three hundred of them, wrapped in neat bundles in sheets of paper. He took one of the notes and went to the village for the food. He kept silent about the old man's illness, as he had been bidden, and when he had returned to the little house he set about preparing a hot meal.

The old man would not eat. He waved the food away as if in disgust.

"Take every bit of it yourself," he said in a cross tone. "You have fine arms and legs on you that need strengthening, and a grand healthy body that's like a young tree."

Towards evening the pain subsided. The old man was overjoyed. His body was at ease once more. He found that he could move his legs without being tortured. He shouted to the young tinker, "I'll be out at the work again at the crack of dawn. I'll be sowing the seeds before you have time to rub the sleep out of your eyes!" He wept with joy at his freedom from the pain, and the young tinker could hear him babbling to himself in the low-ceilinged room.

In the morning a change had come over him. He seemed to have recovered from his illness. He rose from the bed, dressed himself by his own efforts, and staggered out of the room. He crossed the kitchen to the door of the house, as upright as if he were a young man again. The young tinker heard him clomping round to the garden at the back of the house. He heard the rattle of a spade and the *chip-chip* of it as it bit at the pebbles in the earth. Then there was silence, and he grew alarmed. He rushed

around the end of the house to the garden. He saw the old man lying flat across the turned earth, his face pressed into the mould. All breathing had ceased in his body. He was as lifeless as the spade by his side.

In the branch of a cherry tree a blackbird was whistling sweetly. The first blossom had opened and the wind had torn a few of the petals away and was swirling them towards the earth. Spring rain drifted on the wind, spattering against the old man's clothes, making dark blobs across his shoulders.

The young tinker stooped and took the old man in his arms. He carried him into the house and placed him on the double bed. He covered him carefully with the thin, frayed quilt, then he went out to the kitchen.

For a few minutes he stood by the door of the press as if he were tempted by the neat bundles of notes in the jar. He shrugged his shoulders at last, took his bundle, a loaf of bread, a little butter and cheese, a few rashers of bacon, and left the house. When he reached a bend in the road he turned and looked back towards the house. The rain was drifting over it in a haze as if wishing to shut it off from the vision of mankind.

He turned again and faced out across the countryside. A coldness lay against his heart, and loneliness was growing in his breast like a prickly weed. As he went on and on along the rain-swept road a great silence seemed to cloak him round. Tears sprang to his eyes and coursed down to his lips.

EDWARD GOLDEN

INITIAL FEAR

THE sun broke through and the grey mountainside was splashed with sudden colour. At a shout from Permins, lounging technicians started up and got out of camera range; actors in ragged period suits dodged about to get ready for the 'Wicklow Cottage' scene. It was then I remembered my ring. Had I left it a mile away in the barn where we dressed? A poor farmer of 1880 would hardly wear a heavy gold signet. Yes, I must have put it on top of a costume hamper. Permins, always jolly, was easy to approach; I told him and he sent the unit car back.

Later, unusually solemn, he came to me.

"Afraid your ring isn't on the hamper now."

"No?"

"No, Ernie dear—coz it's here!" Grinning, he thrust it into my hand and such a glow of gratitude engulfed me that I forgot even a bare 'Thank You.'

But perhaps I should not have felt so grateful. I wonder? Yet Permins ought have had my thanks because for the odd stark thing that happened later, he was in no way responsible. He could not know—I did not know myself—what close neighbours death and my ring were soon to be.

I was staying with friends at Aran Park, then irreverently known as "Guinea Pig Farm". The residents had raised such a storm about the Corporation using them as the guinea pigs of an experiment in alternate blue and amber street lights that this network of semi-detached villas, with its shrub-planted roundabouts and tree-lined walks, became the butt of the humorists. All that however is beside the point. Far more important is Charlie, my host in this pleasant stretch of suburbia. Indeed Charlie is the heart of the matter. Proud owner of a rich baritone which helped him supplement his office earnings, he had a matinee that Saturday at the Olympia but was looking forward to the night, when he was to play Valentine in 'Faust'.

Before leaving for the Wicklow location on the morning of that eventful Saturday, I met him upstairs and having told him of my ring fever of the previous day, asked him to wear it for me.

"Anyway, Charlie, you'll need something flashy on your hand to-night. And it may bring you luck!" He laughed and took it. I peeped in at his baby daughter, then scrambling downstairs called goodbye to Ellen, his wife—and remembered, before dashing for the bus at the end of the park, to shut the gate on their neatly kept garden of flowers.

The day was made for film units: thin wisps of cloud and a blue sky. But by eleven, it began to drizzle. One single shot was canned that whole interminable day. It was unanimously agreed that doing nothing and being paid for it was more tedious than one might expect.

And when at long last the two shuttle taxis arrived to take us down from the cheerless mountain, it was through mud and drizzle we ran to snatch seats in them. It was good to be moving even though we should be dropped at Ardaglanna, five miles away, to await the special coach from Dublin.

In the local, we gazed out over our drinks through dim windows at the still unending drizzle. Only when a car moved away outside did I spot the vacant seat in a corner of the pub. Before sitting down I picked up a crumpled copy of the evening paper. Too bored to read, I merely glanced at the headings. But what was this small heavy inset? Police Appeal: Identity of man fatally injured in Dame Street at 1.45 p.m.—no papers—a towel—A GOLD SIGNET RING—(The words jumped at me)—Initials cut in bold cursive script: E. G. Crazy my mind swerved from the main horror and persisted in trying to account for the towel. But of course: his make-up towel!

I do not know what I said or did but somehow McDarling was beside me: I was not to be a fool; there were more Ee Gees in the world than Ernest Galley. Others gathered curiously and he had to explain. He made light of it and they laughed.

"Well, will yez all look at Galley, the supreme egotist," says Hogan. "About quarter the population of Ireland is in Dublin, along with thousands of Yanks, Britishers and Corkmen. There's an E.G. ring on a corpse and of course it must belong to the gallant Galley!"

"But my friend would be in that street at that very time; he had a matinee at the Olympia. Don't you see? It's certain that between one p.m. and two, wearing such a ring, *he* passed along Dame Street."

The laughter was less now and even comedian Hogan's cackle, meant to cheer me, was unconvincing.

"Here!" this from McDarling. "The 'bus that passes Aran Park stops near that theatre. Is it likely your man would get out at Trinity College and walk all the way up Dame Street?"

The instant cries of agreement might have swept further discussion aside had I not spoken at once: "You know many call me Earnan O Gailbhe . . ."

Hogan would not have given that kindly snicker had he guessed the hard pearl of certainty then growing in my mind.

"I wanted the monogram to fit my name in both forms: there's a small 'o' you'd hardly notice linking the E and the G."

"Okay, we're almost back in civilisation here," says Hogan, in a way that brought laughter. "Ardaglanna actually has a Post Office! Why not ring the Civic Guards and set your mind at rest?"

"A small 'o'? Wait now till I see-eh," said the heavy voice at the other end. And in the heavier interval, there rose up before me that little suburban garden: snapdragons, their frilly sedateness belied by a many-coloured levity, and warm marigolds like snug drops of sunlight. I saw the infant capers of the cherub, saw her mother . . . Her mother? Poor Ellen! what would she do now? It would be nearly midnight before I met her. . . . Then the slow voice was making sounds again: Where would I be speaking from? Who was I? How was I related to the deceased? I was answering mechanically before I realised that my original query about that little 'o' had not been answered. I repeated it. There were long moments of nothing but the live hum of the wire. Then the thick drawl made answer.

The others bundling into the special which had just arrived must have guessed from my face what news I had had. Nobody spoke to me except once and that was McDarling who leaned across, when the lights went on, to give me a cigarette. As we moved off I remembered with a ghastly quirk of humour how the moment the voice had answered my query, I dropped the phone back on its cradle and nodded a grave 'Thank You' at it.

I don't recall saying goodbye to McDarling that night, nor do I remember boarding the 'bus for home. Mechanically I had got off at the end of Aran Park and becoming aware of where I was, wondered about the two or three others who had got off with me, they had disappeared into the blackness. And in the dark distance, there was only the fast diminishing blob of light that was the 'bus. I could hear the wind stir the shrubs in the dim park. Idly I noted how it made a recurring pattern of sound. But less idly and with mounting resentment I felt waves of tingling fear crawl over me in the same rhythmic gusts. Perhaps the eyes see farther than we know and send their message along impaired paths to the brain which is accordingly slow in grasping it. Certainly I had a sensation of horror long full moments before the object of my fright appeared. . . . I cannot give it a name. It had the bulk and shape of Charlie. It wore a suit like his but with all colour drained from it. And the skin! . . . I have never seen a leper---but perhaps my idea of what 'leprous' means is therefore heightened beyond the reality. Still, when that term leapt to mind, it seemed a tame sagging word to describe the awful huelessness of that woe-begone face.

"Your ring brought me no luck, Ernie."

Only once had I heard such deafening sounds. It was in Donegal when I stood at the edge of a desolate mountain lake and felt while gazing into its smooth mirror that I hung poised between sky and sky: only God and myself. I fancied, were floating here in this utter quiet at the heart of a double world. But all that measureless beauty was soon to come rushing up to shallow nothingness. Suddenly from behind a boulder an unsuspected hand plopped four pebbles into the water. I went cold with shock. And

of one thing I was certain: those four plops that shattered the underworld of the lake were the loudest sound that could ever again take me unaware. I was wrong. These grim articulations of the *thing* were louder. Into the vault of the night they tumbled like thunder claps: "Your ring brought me no luck!"

I backed to the railing of the shrub-plot and leaned against it. Would nobody ever come? How did I ever feel warmly towards this damned ugly stretch of semi-detachedom? What unimaginative fool had designed houses with living rooms at the back so that no strip of homely light ever fell across its precious avenues and crescents? Even the entrance porches were at the side!

That small steely core of consciousness that shares neither my joy nor sorrow but always stands outside me, critical, facetious, aloof was then coolly analysing and speculating while the real me slumped petrified against the iron fence. It was nice to know, suggested this small tough core, that ghosts after all did not speak in the sepulchral tones of Hamlet Senior. Nor, forsooth, did this *thing* speak of matters eternal. Listen to that, it bade me. I listened, and my saner self explained it as a spectral prolongation of earth life, a vision not an entity at all but an earthbound fragment of a being already living on another plane. For what I listened to was common and ordinary enough. Yet God knows its plainness brought no relief from terror:

"You're drunk. Ellen will be so disappointed; she has your favourite dish: orange fritters."

Besides, it was said dully with nothing of Charlie's buoyancy. He turned and not daring to look at him, I followed by his side. Uselessly my brain suggested flight in the opposite direction. I just went on step by step and the voice went on and on too. Something about the cloakroom at the gateway to the office building. "Washed after work and came out." Good God! it was going to tell me about the accident. Even then I was powerless to turn and run. What was this green-white face talking about? "Washbasin . . . Towel . . ." The towel on the body! If only I could gather will to turn and run. Where would the narration end? Would the grisly details continue into the beyond . . . Beyond the scream of brakes, beyond the crumpled form awkwardly stili on a city street? This was too much. I stopped and as I slumped against a garden railing, I felt the chill damp in the underarms of my shirt.

"Are you ill, Ernie?"

"Get to hell away!" I screamed at the advancing pale horror. "Don't you touch me. You won't drag me into your world!"

"But you're white . . ."

"White? WHITE! you should see yourself!" I said with a nervy mirthless giggle. And then the ghost said something that changed this inane noise into a laugh:

"Of course! it's this newfangled lighting." That was funny enough from an astral being but the qualification was even fun-

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nier. Peals of laughter tore the respectable quiet of Aran Park to shreds as I realised that what he actually said was: "This *blasted* newfangled lighting!"

"Charlie, I love you!" I cried and threw my arms about him. The jumble of words I had heard as we walked, now suddenly fell into an intelligible pattern: the cloaks at the gateway was often used by the public. To avoid scraping soap on my ring, he had put it on a washbasin and forgotten it. When he went back it was gone. No excuse for himself. There had been thefts before: soap, wall mirrors, and that very day a towel. . . . Charlie's obvious embarrassment at being hugged threatened immediate and violent action, so I stepped back smartly with: "No, not drink, relief! Come home and I'll give you the paper to read."

Then quite unaccountably—from Charlie's view—I blessed myself. There is an odd compression of experience in two minutes during which one sweats with fright, laughs with relief, and then solemnly prays a 'God-have-mercy' for some unknown wretch in a morgue.

PAUL BRAMBLE

CIRCUS

From the great striped tent
Brass and cymbal
Seem no doubt to offer
Daring performance
And clowning,
Heels over head.
Guy ropes gnaw the pegs
Containing
This dirigible of seamed canvas,
Which bellows, monster-like,
From the wind off the strand;
And tethered piebalds
Stamp and hoof,
Ears flickering the while
At the rise and fall
Of acclamation.
Next when all has gone,
Naked to the open sky,
Left only
A spattered circle
Of a multitude of cipherings.

MARCH

With suddenness
Light spreads upon
Squared pavement,
And particles
As they come
Take a forgotten lustre.
From side streets
Usual sounds
Of the youngest
At play
Are at once
An apparition
Of versatility.
Wind leads a dance,
Pinching the chimney stack
It disperses
And hustles
With clapping expectancy.

DENIS JOHNSTON

JOXER IN TOTNES

A study in Sean O'Casey

The little Devonshire town of Totnes is about as English as they come. It has a Civic Centre, a Combined Cash Chemist, a number of well-timbered pubs (mild and bitter), a high percentage of Shoppes, and the usual decorous bus queues in which gloomy housewives stand with their baskets on their arms. Sean O'Casey looks a little out of place in these surroundings, and the housewives are inclined to stare after him as he walks by in his cap and his jersey, with a Red Army badge displayed in his buttonhole. But the better-informed ones know that it is just another inoffensive literary gent, and they pass the word along: That's Seen O'Casey.

As we view this odd spectacle of Ireland's only living dramatist of international repute, buried in one of the more Arty-crafty corners of Merrie England—and liking it—we may legitimately ask one or two pertinent questions. Joyce in Paris was all very well, and Shaw in a Hertfordshire Vicarage seemed natural enough. But O'Casey in Totnes is about as relevant as crubeens at a Dainty Tea. One gathers from some of the sourer pages of *Inishfallen Fare Thee Well* that he never felt very comfortable in Merrion Square, especially when it was trying to be civil to him. Yet he gets on very nicely with the distressed gentlewomen, and appears to be quite as happy in the role of Seen as ever he was in that of Sean.

We might be able to work up some simple explanation of this, had the old Joxer cut himself off entirely from his native land. But the *Irish Press* and the *Irish Democrat* are delivered regularly at his door, and his bookshelves betray a keen interest in everything that is being written in contemporary Ireland. From the way the sparks fly off him at the mention of some of his oldest friends, one gathers that he must still think quite a lot about them. What in hell, then, is going on? Is the man who can see through the legend of 1916 really impressed by the world of E. M. Delafield? Has he been lured away by the gleam of yellowing cricket flannels? Or have the chimies from some lichened tower opened his ears to the voice of Rupert Brooke?

The facile answer, of course, is that your man's behaviour is based on vanity. O'Casey can take the well-heeled patronage of London, but not what he conceives to be the condescension of middle class Dublin. What is intolerable from those who knew him at the Abbey is all right when it comes respectfully addressed to Mr O'Casey, the distinguished immigrant. In fairness to this prevailing view, it does not mean that Sean is so naïve as to be motivated by social snobbery. He never resented the amiable advances of Lady Gregory—a literary slum landlord, if ever there was one. On the other hand he obviously has a profound and deeply rooted resentment for Yeats, in spite of the poet's efforts to help him

The difference—according to this explanation—lies in the fact that Lady G. never concerned herself with what he was talking about, whereas Yeats presumed to monitor him as a thinker.

But, like all facile answers, this one is really no answer at all—or at best a superficial one. Vanity is there, as it is in practically all great public figures. And why not?—for vanity is one of the vices that is not inconsistent with greatness, and in fact is nourished by it. I believe that the root of the problem lies deeper than this, and is symptomatic not only of O'Casey's personal bafflement, but also of his importance to Ireland as a living figure today. It is the same thing that makes him reject the plays on which his reputation is very properly founded—the plays of Sean—and insist that we all admire the plays of Sean, which with the best will in the world would never have got him talked about outside the minor Drama Leagues, but for the others.

Even more confounding to many of his old admirers is the note of self-dramatisation and self-pity that has grown more and more insistent in the four volumes of his autobiography—the note that makes one wonder whether Sean has not lost the compassion he once had for his fellow men, and transferred it all to himself. For example, there are many of us who have been spoken to roughly, by one of the two oldest inhabitants of the Abbey Theatre—a brusque little carpenter called Seaghan Barlow. But we don't suffer very deeply on that account: Less still do we publicise so minor an incident as a reason for never setting foot in the place again.

Yet, O'Casey, for all his readiness to react with the huffiness of a member of Alexandra College—and worse still, to mention the matter afterwards—is not by any means a small man, and probably knows in his heart that he has had as much recognition from his birthplace and from the world at large, as any living man ought to have while his work is still unfinished. What we must do, therefore, is to separate the symptoms from the cause, and concentrate on his obvious importance as a national asset, without much regard to anything he may say about himself. If he were a cistern and not a fountain, we each would be able to contemplate our own reflection in his placid surface, and feel gratified on that account. This is the basis of much of the appreciative criticism of other people's work. On the other hand, cisterns are not much to be proud of, so we ought to be ready to put up a hearty cheer for the few fountains that we possess, even as we step back to a safe distance.

But there are larger reasons than this for being in favour of O'Casey, although it might be better, first of all, to touch on the question of his proper pigeon-hole. Are we to assume that he is an "Irish" dramatist at all—under the current definition of that office? or must he be relegated to that sinister limbo of the half-fish in which suspects like myself are left to mourn? On the side of any claim to be "Irish" we have the fact that he is a Gaelic speaker, has a good Dublin accent, is well versed in books, is some-

what lacking in social graces, has probably been on strike, and is usually naïve in the extreme whenever sex rears its ugly head in his works. On the other hand, we have the damning evidence that he is not a Catholic, and appears to find his countrymen amusing—both of which facts are usually regarded as *prima facie* proof of membership of that illegal organisation—the decayed Anglo-Irish. What is more, he has a destructive *saeva indignatio*, and an unromantic attitude towards the colour of pillar boxes that also suggests the worst. If only he had been in favour of World War I, and a disinterested spectator of World War II, instead of the reverse, it might have been possible to list him with the Old Gang in spite of his attachment to Larkin. As it is, O'Casey is a living proof of the fact that people like him cannot be shoved into any pigeon-hole, and if he is not "Irish" under present definitions, it would be well to change the definitions as soon as possible.

As a writer, it is equally hard to classify him. In *The Gunman* and *Juno* he is obviously an Abbey realist. In *The Plough* he successfully comes out with a style that is peculiarly his own. In his later and favourite work he adopts the trappings of a modern Euphuist, making use of a spate of adjectives and mixed imagery that often out-Lelys the Elizabethans. On the merits and demerits of this development we may all have our own opinions, provided we keep them to ourselves and don't attempt to argue or lament over Sean. The consummate craftsman who could create the second Act of *The Plough and the Stars* clearly knows as much as need be known about the English language, and any way he chooses to write after that is obviously intentional. Even if we question his views, we cannot have any doubts about his sincerity. In fact, Sean's sincerity sometimes verges on the tiresome.

I believe that it is in this connection that we can find the true reason for his somewhat churlish attitude towards people like Yeats. More than one good poet has managed to flourish and to justify himself under the shade of this gigantic timber. Higgins is an outstanding example. But I wonder whether the same can be said of many dramatists? As an influence on the Theatre, Yeats was not an unmixed blessing. It is true that without him, the Irish National Theatre, as we know it, would probably never have existed at all, and that during his lifetime he gave it both its stability and its Canon. But unfortunately Yeats' theatrical Canon was no good, except in the very specialised field in which he himself excelled. One of my most treasured possessions is an early script of *The Old Lady Says "No"!* corrected and annotated by Yeats, and the more I study this dispassionately, the more I realise after this long lapse of years, what a danger Yeats was to any younger playwright coming within his orbit.

This is not in any sense an attack on Yeats' good intentions. He was as genuinely anxious to encourage all of us as he was sincere in his belief that he was doing O'Casey a kindness by rejecting *The Silver Tassie*. Still, the fact remains that as a mentor for practi-

cal dramatists he was usually worse than useless, because his taste was highly specialised, and theatrically he knew very little of what it takes, this side of Tokio. If you wanted to have a soul of your own, it was necessary to give Yeats an extremely wide berth. And this, consciously or subconsciously, is more likely to be what drove O'Casey away in the first place—not Seaghan Barlow.

Why then, did he not come back again, after the ageing poet had ceased to be so overpowering, and had handed his Theatre over to the Civil Service? In my belief, it is because O'Casey's problem of self expression is not only one of defending himself against Yeats. In a much wider sense, he has to fight off Ireland herself.

It may be assumed that every writer of O'Casey's calibre and persistence has got something that he needs to say. It is seldom clear what this really is until after he has completed his life's work. He may not even be quite certain himself. As with the rubbing of brasses, the design begins to come through only after a good deal of hard scribbling. And even then it is a very arguable point whether it is the pencil that makes the final picture or the thing that is underneath.

Now, whatever it is that O'Casey has got to tell us, it is not about the problems of a questioning Catholic; it is not about Are we Irish or Are we not? It is not about the sorrow of being in jail for an ideal, or the Irish language, or Partition. If it is anything, it is about a much wider problem, which, for good or ill, has not yet raised itself seriously above our domestic horizon. It concerns the world social problem that is either going to create a new order, or is going to end us all in a holocaust of hydrogen bombs.

Herein lies the unique importance of O'Casey to Ireland, and the staggering danger of Ireland to O'Casey. Like Yeats, Ireland at the moment is very specialised both in its tastes and in its interests. For my own part I thank Heaven for this. I am an uncompromising isolationist so far as Ireland is concerned, and hope to see her preserved for as long as possible as a Garden of the Hesperides in a changing world. If her sulks over the Six Counties can keep her out of the next war, against the inclinations of her politicians—if clerical influence can preserve her as a last remaining haven for the middle classes, who am I to object? Indeed I am all in favour of both—at home.

Not so O'Casey, whose soul is all tied up with something that is no concern of the Ireland of today. This makes him important to her, but it also makes it important for him to keep away—to do his quacking in a pond where there are no decoy ducks like Anti-Clericalism or Partition. And so, for the nonce, maybe it is just as well for him to be Seen in Totnes. If it is our immediate loss, it may be our eventual gain. And in any event, there is a much better reason for it than Seaghan Barlow—which is something to feel relieved about.

L. A. G. STRONG

SEAMUS O'SULLIVAN

I suppose that there are, in the lives of all of us, two or three writers about whom we can never be dispassionate and find it hard to be impartial. One may be irrationally dear to us as the author of a book or a poem which meant much at a crisis in our lives; another we may love from childhood association, or because of someone with whom poem or book was strongly entwined. There are all manner of reasons for these attachments which, like an affection felt for a human being, hold to all they see, and do not analyse what so pleases them.

I have such an affection for the work of Seamus O'Sullivan. Lest that seem a left-handed compliment, I add that I can support it rationally. Early though it began, it is a well-founded affection, a lucky affection. Seamus O'Sullivan's *Poems*, published by Maunsel in 1912, was the first book of contemporary poetry which I bought out of my school pocket money. I was led to it by, of all unlikely guides, the late James Douglas, who reviewed it enthusiastically in the *Star*. I bought the book, I devoured it with wonder and delight, I learned many of its poems by heart, and can say several still. I even went so far as to translate one into Latin elegiacs.

Now that kind of affection, the admiration of a boy for something which not only satisfies him of itself but opens many avenues, is something which cannot be defined, can never be replaced, and, if the object is worthy, lasts a lifetime. I do not feel towards O'Sullivan's verse exactly as I felt close on forty years ago; that would be impossible: but more than mere affection is left. He is not a major poet, but he is a very fine, a scrupulous, and, at his best, a magical minor poet. He will last. As long as there is a history of Irish poetry, he will have his honourable place. Indeed, he is a far better poet than certain of his famous predecessors.

I go with silent feet and slow
As all my black-robed brothers go;
I dig a while and read and pray,
So portion out my pious day
Until the evening time, and then
Work at my book with cunning pen.
If she would turn to me a while,
If she would turn to me and smile,
My book would be no more to me
Than some forgotten phantasy,
And God no more unto my mind
Than a dead leaf upon the wind.

His work is comparatively little known in England, apart from a handful of anthology pieces. If he has had a misfortune as a poet, it has been that some of his early poems were in an idiom somewhere between that of A.E. and Yeats—though nearer to A.E.; and it took a subtle ear to catch the quiet but highly individual and distinctive music of a singer who in fact owed little to any contemporary. Say these lines aloud to yourself:—

When we saw the moss-scented earth of your loved Meath
cover you,

Hap you in from the chill of that wintry morn,
Not death was in the thought of those who bowed over you,
But life, and life abundant, from which are born
Brimmed beakers, and laughter unfettered, and brave unceasing song

"Earth to earth", but earth kindly, triumphant, unmourning
As of old the laughter-lit waves by the Sirmian headland
Lapped round the barque, in glee at their poet's returning
So the loved light earth of your Laracor welcomed you home

and these:

Twilight people, why will you still be crying,
Crying and calling to me out of the trees?
For under the quiet grass the wise are lying,
And all the strong ones gone over the seas.

and these:

Dance, dance with your laughter-filled eyes
And your red lips apart:
You are dancing beside the red sea
Of the blood of my heart.

At first sight, they are not unlike those of other poets of their time. But the rhythms are different. The man who wrote them has a wonderfully delicate ear. He is not an innovator; he has caught the accents of his time, and of the time before it; yet what he has done has his own individual signature in every phrase.

If there is a model, I believe we can look for it outside Ireland:

They are not long, the weeping and the laughter,
Love and desire and hate.
I think they have no portion in us after
We pass the gate.

We hear the accents with a difference in O'Sullivan, but there is, I think, more than a chance resemblance.

I have kept still untroubled that clear tide
Deep wherein lay

Your image in its crystal unconcealed
A Summer's day.

But the Dowson quality, strongly marked in the earlier work, is soon assimilated. Only its virtues survive, a personal simplicity of diction, a rare control over the long line or phrase, and a music which even the so-called invective verses never lose.

O'Sullivan is a poet of melancholy. The occasional short gay pieces which lighten up the anthologies are like bursts of Dublin sunlight on a wet day, which make the cloud that follows seem darker than ever. He looks back to the past, and mourns continually for the great days of Greece.

O happy-hearted singer of a day
So golden that its very memory
Can stir the heart to sing its ecstasy,
A rivulet to the ocean of your lay.

Elsewhere he says—at the end of an essay in *Mud and Purple*—“Perhaps I am the last of the Greeks.” It is a strange delusion. Bless his heart, there is nothing Greek about him. He lacks altogether the fierce objective outlook of the Greek writers. Synge came far nearer to it. “They’re all gone now, and there isn’t anything more the sea can do to me,” might almost be a free translation of the cry of the bereaved mother in the Greek play, “I have no one to feed me in my old age.” But O'Sullivan, with his long lines of melody, wavering yet controlled, his gentle melancholy of lake and sedge and rath, his spasms of conscience and Christian imagery—“Three crosses crown our Calvary”—his complete refusal to be up and doing—nothing less Greek could be found in a long day's march. The Greeks were no backward lookers. Now and then, it is true, the Irishman takes hold upon himself and tries to rouse up from the native nostalgic mood immortalised by Moore, who lamented Tara and saw the round towers of other days in the wave beneath him shining.

We are not kingly born:
Why should we mourn
The son of Usna left companionless,
Deirdre's sad loveliness?

But the ensuing injunction to be gay as a butterfly comes soft and unconvincing. The poet is happier under his gray skies; the hard Greek sunlight would not suit him. We admire what we are not, and covet what we do not possess, as Socrates demonstrated to Euthyphro.

Hardness is the one quality his verse has not. Even the invectives, while they show him to dislike a number of men and things, completely lack the ferocity of Yeats or Stephens or Synge.

You could have made of any other air
The little careful mouthfuls of your songs.

Even A.E. went further than that, in his open letter to Kipling. No; O'Sullivan must be judged by what he does best. He is, in his verse at least, not a good hater. He has a sudden, brief gaiety, which usually takes the streets for its scene. But, best of all, he is the poet of regret. He is most himself when, in a graceful music, and with phrases chosen with care and connoisseurship, over his wine he laments lost fire, lost beauty, lost courage. He can be witty and picturesque, particularly in his prose. He can astonish with a phrase, concluding an article on the music hall:—

"But through all the deepening mist of vaguely moving figures and vaguer music, floats undimmed that delicate left-hand of the conductor—a lily in hell."

His thoughts often go to the theatre. Thus, in an essay on Window Blinds:—

"The moment before the rise of the curtain is only a moment, but, as every lover of the stage must know, the impression then received lasts through the whole performance. The Greeks had recognised this, and therefore in their theatres the curtain moved in the manner I have described. What a preparation for a play that was! the gradual unveiling of the sky, of the stars, perhaps, and what an ending! On our modern stage, as everyone knows, the first things to be seen (and the last) are the boots of the actors. Mr. Tree, Mr. Martin Harvey, and others in a less degree, have made heroic efforts to ameliorate things, by making their boots speak, as it were. But even the splendid eloquence of Mr. Tree's boots cannot save the situation."

Religious belief is raised in many of the poems, but with some degree of contradiction. I referred just now to the occasional use of Christian imagery; but often, possibly in allegiance to Greece, Christian thought is criticised or rejected. The poem about the monk is balanced by another rebuking nuns; and the short poem, *At Christmas*, hardly suggests an orthodox view of the festival.

The feet that trod the mountain grass
The beaks that sipped the dew,
Hang here in all death's piteousness
To sate the glutton view.
The eyes that saw the hills grow bright
The wings that flashed the morn,
Must perish, for the Prince of Light,
The King of Life, is born.

True, that reflects on the practice of the worshippers rather than on their faith: but there is, to say the least, an equivocal note in most of the poems which mention Christianity or use its symbols. The poet is on the side of the angels: he blesses more

than he curses, and far more felicitously, praising cow or goose in better verse than he can find to damn a hypocrite or an Irishman that forsook Parnell: but his angels are generously recruited, and by no means all of them cast down their golden crowns upon the glassy sea.

O'Sullivan is not a copious poet. His bibliography is small, and in the several volumes of his work which I possess there is a good deal of overlapping. It is time that a good selection from his work was put on the market, in a permanent form. As I said at the beginning, I cannot be dispassionate about it. Certain of his poems have been part of the furniture of my mind for close on forty years. Through him I came to Yeats, to A.E., to Joseph Campbell, and a score of poets. From him I learned something of what poetry is. It is too big a debt to repay with anything but affection; yet the chance to say a word of thanks in public comes welcome, and the thanks are overdue.

Gratitude need not be blind, nor early admiration a mere habit. Lavishly represented in anthologies, Seamus O'Sullivan's work is not as well known as it deserves to be. At his best he is the master of a rare and subtle verse; a lyric poet with a voice that is all his own. His country owes him much—including the magazine which he edited and maintained for so many years: but he will be admired wherever readers have an ear for music and a liking for a generous mind.

BOOK REVIEWS

A NOVEL OF DISTINCTION

CALL FOR A MIRACLE, BY BENEDICT KIELY. (Cape, 10/6).

Mr. Kiely's new novel is a work of distinction. It has subtlety, humour, pathos, poetry, a sense of words and a style. Published a few months ago it has in the meantime been widely reviewed and discussed and already, rashly maybe, we are set to find a niche for its author among the greater novelists of our time. Rashly perhaps but inevitably.

The study takes place during a brief period a few years ago in Dublin and centres on a journalist who in one way or another touches on the life of a girl in black, a widow and her son, a priest, a blonde, a group of students and others. The action is well-built and the characters are clear-cut and hold our sympathy. The novel is in fact first of all good entertainment and is certain to gather more and more readers.

The particular difficulty of the Catholic novelist would appear to be that his work tends to be static. The strength of his faith leaves him little to discover in his writing. He may use various devices to infuse dramatic tension into his novel but invariably the final chapter disappoints. We feel that there has been no development; an experience has been missed, and the work, often magnificent in parts, as a whole is unconvincing.

Call for a Miracle uses a new device to overcome this difficulty and it succeeds. The accent falls differently. In this lies the novel's distinction.

Life for most of the characters is a little sad and a little aimless. The others, the less complex, believe and live accordingly. A background of principle and of conduct is delicately poised against indifference, unbelief, forgetfulness. Meeting one another, hurting and suffering, the characters develop, experience. Believing or not they keep our interest and we are convinced and entertained.

It is in a way the device of paradox, and moves into a secondary theme in the city and its monuments and its history, loved or overlooked. This is a novel which can be enjoyed at different levels. On our appreciation of the paradox depends the quality of our enjoyment.

P. J. MADDEN.
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TWO IRISH POETS

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND, BY EWART MILNE. (*The Bodley Head*, 7/6).

MOUNTAINS BENEATH THE HORIZON, BY WILLIAM BELL. (*Faber*, 8/6).

Diamond Cut Diamond is a collection of Ewart Milne's poems: he has already five books of verse to his credit, and his work has been widely admired.

His craftsmanship is excellent throughout, and for the most part the verse is strong. One could wish, perhaps, for a little more hope—and much more joy . . . poets, after all, should not be disgruntled persons, even though it is a sorry season for the tribe. As Mr. Milne says himself:

Yes, this writing is hard going with many sideslips.

It is necessary to train to the nth and avoid complications

The Waterside Poem is fine, and I recall the pleasure I had illustrating it when it first appeared. *Voi Che Sapete* is another, almost perfect, poem made up of music and magic: *Desert Figure*, too, has the same dreamlike quality.

On the whole, however, Mr. Milne inclines too much to direct speech:—a mode more suited to the ballad, of which there is only one in this book: *A Ballad For An Orphan*—a moving poem. *Diamond Cut Diamond* is a pleasing book, and will find many readers.

William Bell, a young poet of Six-County birth, was tragically killed while climbing at the age of 24. His whole consciousness seems to have been haunted by a foreknowledge of his end, and the last poem in the book begins: .

Oh leave his body broken on the rocks . . .

continuing:

Cover his face from the unfriendly skies,
there's nothing we can do to help him now.

The level of the verse is extremely high, containing Twelve Rhetorical Elegies, and a sequence of twenty Sonnets. There is, of course, much mere youthful exuberance, much exultation in sheer verbal felicity: but there is also so much more: so much promise in this budding personality, that one cannot help wondering to what heights he might have risen, this child who survived a war

to end in a crevasse. He and two companions lie in Zermatt under a stone inscribed:

Non Enim Accestis ad Tractabilem Montem.

CECIL FRENCH SALKELD.

AN IRISHMAN'S DIARY, BY PATRICK CAMPBELL. (*Cassell*, 8/6).

During two glorious years Patrick Campbell was "Quidnunc" in the *Irish Times*, and the quiet gaiety of his writing helped to disperse for many of us that early morning feeling, so that we set out in good humour to face the recurring daily task. He has now collected the choicest scraps from his Diary, and they have been published with really delightful illustrations by Ronald Searle. Mr. Campbell excels in describing with a racy wit the most commonplace people and events, and his selection of phrases and turns of speech to point the comedy in his characters, is exact and always apt. He writes very pleasantly, and there is a general absence of extravagance. He flashes his searchlight here and there to pick out events, ordinary and extraordinary, and in doing so gives us a very faithful picture of Irish life in the years 1944-1946. The strange thing is that this searchlight of his does not distort, whether he is describing furniture removal men "fighting a mattress all the way down the stairs," or the ingenuous way Mr. de Valera can, by talking about the button-hole stitch, reduce a Mansion House full of formidable Fianna Fail female helpers to a state of cooing ecstasy. I have spent three evenings laughing as I turned the pages of this book; and I have put it away on its shelf quite convinced that when I take it down again in three months' time, I shall enjoy every page of it as much.

MERVYN WALL.

SEVENTY CANTOS, by EZRA POUND (*Faber* 25/-)

POEMS 1938-1949, by ROBERT LOWELL (*Faber* 9/6)

Reading maketh a full man. The phrase comes to one, reading Ezra Pound—"expressing with clearness what he thinks with vigour", as Scott said of Dryden. He should be a good historian that could appreciate these *Seventy Cantos* thoroughly. Art, however, being much deeper and simpler than any sort of learning, can delight even the ignorant—the right kind of ignorant, of course. Ezra Pound is a master of words: he can make them do anything. Besides having music ever at his disposal, imperceptibly various—he calls in occasionally the visual element. In one of his most difficult Cantos (xxxvi), he introduces giant capital letters all over the place—always with effect. We have beautiful Chinese writing, too, when it suits the theme. One art must always be enriched by drawing another in—like ballet into a verse play. He is great on

IRISH WRITING

Finance: I seem to hear the Social Creditor preaching? Personally, when Finance is the subject, I get very quickly out of my depth. *Oh scarcity of money*. I can enjoy that joke, though. Of the countless jests throughout the book, I recall another:

... arrived last evening with the troops that had been sent out against him . . .

He can mimic any known dialect or accent by his supreme gift of spelling.

If a nation will master its money: - I find that a profound saying. Has a nation ever tried 'to master its money'?

The image of Dionysus—that time he was captured and carried off in a boat—making vine branches appear, to burst into leaf and fruit about him—recurs frequently: a magic symbol of the poet's power over circumstance. The book right through is high entertainment. Even through the—very occasional—ribaldry and coarseness, we are conscious of the imperturbable dignity of a great personality. For the most part, we have much beauty of lofty images, of words drowned in music.

and I saw then, as of waves taking form.
As the sea, hard, a glitter of crystal,
And the waves rising that formed, holding their form.
No light reaching through them.

But this image seems a right one to end with, it has such finality.

And the old man went out there
beating his mule with an asphodel.

In Mr. Lowell's book there is some splendour and much force. But he is heavy-handed; he lays about him. We travel with him over rough seas. There is beauty, and quietness, however, in 'Our Lady of Walsingham'. I find most of the poems extremely hard to understand: the unrelaxing strenuousness of the poet's mode, and his loudness, do not make for clarity. He himself makes a fine allusion to the coxes' squeakings dwarfing 'The resurrexit dominus of all the bells'. Perhaps he is too clever—really too clever. And he loves nothing.

Is this a misprint? *Lavabis nos et super nivem delabor*. I read in my Missal: *Lavabis me et super nivem dealabor*. Or is something else meant? It doesn't sound so well, anyhow . . .

The translations are fine. Reading *War* (after Rimbaud) the heart is touched—deeply . . . touched by Rimbaud, I think.

A Plane Tree By The Water starts:

Darkness has called to darkness, and disgrace
Elbows about our windows in this planned
Babel of Boston where our money talks

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IRISH WRITING

And multiplies the darkness of a land
Of preparation where the Virgin walks
And roses spiral her enamelled face
Or fall to splinters on unwatered streets.

Here we have a hint of tenderness, of regret.

BLANAID SALKELD.

I HEAR YOU CALLING ME—THE STORY OF JOHN McCORMACK, BY LILY McCORMACK. (*W. H. Allen, 10/6*)

The singer, unlike any other kind of virtuoso, is subjected to the intrusion of his everyday personality. The instrument he uses, he laughs with too; he eats and drinks with it. So it is there are so many singers who cannot disguise their all too human frailties in their art, particularly when called upon to sustain a mood created by the composer. Hence the rarity of the singer of songs.

John McCormack was above all one of these. He had the distinctions—varied tone, a wide range of sympathy from the coldness of purity to the sweetness of warmth, and of course his impeccable diction. And he used his gifts with the effortlessness of a great artist. Those of us who have heard him from the concert platform share the memory of his portly figure, waiting with grave dignity for his audience to settle in their seats, to cast the spell of his exquisite voice.

Countess McCormack, in her book, gives as honest a portrait as anyone could ask of one with whom she had shared her life. We see McCormack with his immense vitality overcoming the obstacles of his early career; glimpses of him in the operatic world of World War I; instances of his perceptive intelligence towards his art; his good-humoured vanity. And then with fame comes his enthusiasm for having the good things of life. Unselective he was indeed in all his followings—outside his art. That was a different story. For John McCormack was a tireless worker, and practised a drastic self-discipline.

This book is helped by extracts from John McCormack's projected biography and a discography of his recordings. It ends fittingly with his own words: "I live again the days and evenings of my long career. I dream at night of operas and concerts in which I have had my share of success. Now, like the old Irish Minstrels, I have hung up my harp because my songs are all sung."

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THE CAPUCHIN ANNUAL OFFICE

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SAPPHO, A Play in Verse, BY LAWRENCE DURRELL. (Faber, 10/6)

If narrative poetry appears to be somewhat neglected in our time it would be rash to accuse the poets of shirking a major task or of sacrificing substance to essence. That they are still as interested as those before them in the larger than lyric undertaking is shown by their leaning towards plays, elaborate many of them, in verse. This represents, perhaps, a turning away from mere description to the more oblique presentation of events through speech. Mr Durrell's *Sappho* is particularly impressive in its handling of a large subject, that of the life and loves of the great poetess against a background of the Imperialistic wars of the Greek islands circa 65. The author is well able to "bring people to life." His speech is fine, subtle, though often complicated—and here one feels his total lack of intention to make any concessions to the stage, which combined with the leisurely development of the action, leads one to imagine time and again that one is reading not a dramatic but a narrative poem. *Sappho*'s "crisis" is to a large extent self-descriptive through long passages, and the central point of the play, her reaction—one of growing disrelish—to the return of her lover, the victorious Pittakos, is already determined before the return by the evident coolness of her feelings towards him. In this it is obvious that Mr Durrell has missed—or spurned—a major dramatic opportunity. And yet what dramatic objectivity cum imagination there is in this play, together with a wealth of reflectiveness, and a lovely invention, which recurs like a *leit-motiv*, in the city destroyed by earthquake, now buried under the sea, and still faintly visible on fine days

But for the two of us, old men both of us,
And garrulous perhaps, all that lies deepest down.
Most personal, real, uncommon, is the city
Which lies below the bay, covered by water.
That city is our childhood.

One hopes that *Sappho* will be given an early production—it might well be very successful on the radio—if only because it should enable the author to determine what road to take.

T.S.

IRISH WRITERS' MARKET GUIDES—EIRE EDITION. (17.
Trinity Street, Dublin, 5/-).

The Eire edition of the Irish Writers' Market Guides, which is now available, will be of very great use to all writers who seek to have their work published in Ireland. It lists well over fifty Irish journals and magazines, and its detailed accounts of the re-

quirements of each are both informative and meticulous. There is an opening chapter of hints to the young writer on how to prepare and submit MSS., with much useful data concerning various rights in material.

The larger categories dealt with are those of general magazines (such as *Ireland's Own*, etc.) quality magazines, religious magazines trade and professional, and women's magazines. Newspapers are not included as it is claimed that their requirements are met by regular contributors. Even so, the Irish newspapers of today seem to have room for, and to encourage, the free-lance journalist, and a supplementary edition to cover this field would be well worthwhile.

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A few Press opinions of Patrick Campbell:

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

- SEAN O'CASEY:** Born in Dublin, 1884. His first plays were presented in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and since then he has gained a world-wide reputation. He has also written four volumes of autobiography.
- DENIS JOHNSTON:** Born Dublin, 1901. Educated in Dublin, Edinburgh, Cambridge University, and Harvard. Director of the Dublin Gate Theatre, 1931-36. Joined the B.B.C. and was their War Correspondent, 1942-1945. Programme Director of the B.B.C. Television Service, 1946-1947. His plays have gained him an international reputation.
- BRYAN GUINNESS:** Born 1905. Educated at Eton and Oxford and was called to the Bar in 1930. Has published many volumes of poetry.
- PADRAIC COLUM:** Bord Longford, 1881. Was one of the leaders of the Irish Literary Revival. Now lives in America where he is a well-known lecturer and critic.
- L.A.G. STRONG:** Born Plymouth, 1896, of predominantly Irish parents and spent much of his youth in Ireland. Has written many books, including novels, poetry, stories, and criticism, and is a well-known broadcaster.
- REARDEN CONNER:** Born Dublin, 1907. Settled in London in 1924 and had his first novel published in 1933. Has had nine others published since then.
- CONSTANCE MADDEN:** Born in Limerick. Is married, has three children, and lives in Cork.
- DESMOND CLARKE:** Born Dublin, 1907. His stories have been published widely in Ireland and Britain. Is Librarian of the Royal Dublin Society.
- PATRICIA LYNCH:** Born in Cork. Educated in Ireland, England and Belgium. Has an international reputation as a writer of children's books which have been translated into many languages.
- PAUL BRAMBLE:** Is the pen-name of a young Cork Painter who has exhibited at the Oireachtas and at exhibitions of the Munster Fine Arts Club. His poetry was first published in *Irish Writing* No. 11.
- EDWARD GOLDEN:** Born in Australia, of Dublin father and Cork mother, and came to Ireland in his early 'teens. Graduated at University College, Cork. Is an Abbey actor and has appeared in the West End and on Broadway.

Readers of *Irish Writing* will be interested to know the names of the Irish prize winners in the World Short Story Competition organised by *Times Pictorial* in association with the *New York*

IRISH WRITING

Herald-Tribune. The first prize winner of £100 is Mr. Walter Macken, successful Irish author-actor at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. The second-prize winner of £50 is Mr. D. J. O'Sullivan, Tory Island Lighthouse, Co. Donegal. He is a well-known writer and an accomplished naturalist whose interest in bird and animal life is widely appreciated.

Mr. Macken has written a remarkably fine story set in the heart of Dublin. Mr. O'Sullivan's story is about a puffin and illustrates his love of nature's creatures. Both these stories will be published exclusively in *Times Pictorial* early in the New Year together with other prize-winning stories from over forty nations. From these will be chosen the World prize winning story which will earn for its author \$5,000.

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College English. October 1946.

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